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DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties

TUNISIA*

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* The present report is being issued as received, without formal editing. For the combined initial and second reports submitted by the Government of Tunisia, see document CEDAW/C/TUN/1-2, which was considered by the Committee at its fourteenth session.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with article 18 of the Convention, this report, which covers the period extending from 1992 to 1998, constitutes the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Tunisia on the progress achieved in implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It also comprises data and information on the progress in efforts undertaken at the national level in the context of carrying through the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Dakar Platform of Action. Information relating to 1999 and indeed 2000 is equally contained in this report.

2. Tunisia has taken due account of the observations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women following its consideration of the combined initial and second reports in 1995. The requested replies and information are provided by virtue of the developments in the progress recorded within the framework of the national policy for the advancement of women in the legislative and institutional fields and in development programmes.

3. This document was prepared in conjunction with all of the ministerial departments, organizations, bodies and non-governmental organizations which are actively engaged in promoting and protecting the rights of women and the family.

4. Sectoral reports were first of all considered by an interdepartmental commission. It was on the strength of these reports, in which the concerned governmental and non-governmental partners had a hand, that an initial assessment report was prepared and examined by the National Council for Women and the Family.

Historical overview of the status of women

5. Stretching over 3,000 years, the history of Tunisia is testimony to the fact that women have often held a privileged place in Tunisia, starting with Carthage, itself founded by a woman, Alyssa, and moving on through the time of the Arab conquest and the Kahena revolt to the institution in Kairouan, the first capital of Islam on African soil, of the Kairouan marriage contract, pursuant to which a bride was permitted to impose monogamy.

6. The call for female emancipation in Tunisia dates back to the early twentieth century and was initiated by the reform movement which developed in the wake of the struggle for independence. A firm supporter of the feminine cause was the thinker Tahar Haddad, who, in the name of Islam, advocated the education of girls and their liberation from the burdens of tradition in a book, published in 1930, entitled La femme dans la société et dans la Chariâa.

7. The first piece of legislation to emerge in independent Tunisia, namely the Personal Status Code, promulgated on 13 August 1956 at the instigation of the leader Habib Bourguiba, the first President of the Republic of Tunisia, responded to this call by abolishing polygamy, instituting official civil marriage and legal divorce, and reorganizing the family on the basis of the equality of both spouses before the law.

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8. The fact that the Personal Status Code was promulgated even prior to the Constitution reveals much about the consciousness which drove Tunisia following its independence, namely that of the need to develop life in society by drawing simultaneously on Arab-Islamic rationalism, universal culture and the requirements of modern-day living.

9. Article 6 of the Constitution, which was promulgated on 1 June 1959, provides that "all citizens have equal rights and duties and are equal before the law", thereby paving the way for subsequent laws progressively to establish the fundamental rights of women in all fields: the eligibility and right to vote, the right to work, the right to free education, the right to social protection, the right to enter into contracts and so on.

10. In 1980, Tunisia was among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Development of the national frame of reference

11. At the economic level, the development of the internal situation in Tunisia during the 1990s was marked by the unfolding of the national economy and its integration into the regional and international market, and at the political level, by the strengthening of the foundations of the democratic multi-party system, the legally constituted State and respect for human rights.

12. Since his accession to the highest executive post on 7 November 1987, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has set the country on a process of overall reform, creating renewal through the tradition of the reform movement while also strengthening the virtues of adherence to modernity. As a result of this process, Tunisia experienced a period of positive economic growth, political stability and social calm with the Eighth National Development Plan (1992-1996) and subsequently the Ninth National Development Plan (1997-2001).

13. As part of a global approach towards human rights in which political and civil rights are associated with economic, social and cultural rights, at the instigation of the Head of State, the process of economic liberalization has gone hand in hand with a social policy aimed at strengthening social stability.

14. The fight against poverty and all forms of social marginalization is a priority policy objective, to which end, in addition to the National Solidarity Fund, the State mobilizes social benefit payments amounting to an annual average of 18 per cent of the gross national product (GNP).

15. In this political and social context marked by the strengthening of democracy and the search for social stability, women's rights, which are considered part and parcel of human rights, are flourishing in an unprecedented manner.

The political choices of the new era

16. The change of 7 November 1987 established new democratic platforms in the context of strengthening the democratic multi-party system and the foundations of the legally constituted State.

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17. Women's rights will not be subject to any compromise: on 19 March 1988, the Head of State, ending any fundamentalist argument, affirmed that "the Personal Status Code is a cultural achievement to which we are bound and by which we stand committed. What Tunisia has managed to achieve for women and the family will be neither challenged nor abandoned."

18. Tunisia has applied itself to advancing the status of women in order to bring it into harmony with the legally constituted State and with democratic freedoms and human rights. In December 1999, an ad hoc commission and the High Committee for Human Rights were charged with exploring ways and means of strengthening the gains achieved for women by proposing the necessary legislative amendments "without belying the Arab-Muslim identity of Tunisia".

19. In the light of the conclusions drawn by these two forums, on 13 August 1992, the Head of State took a series of measures that would considerably strengthen women's rights in the legislative and institutional fields. The date of 13 August 1992 thus marked a new victory for the forces of reform.

20. Since that time, successive measures and laws have been introduced to complete the structure of reform for which the measures of 13 August 1992 laid the foundations. The reform of the Constitution, adopted in 1997, was to constitute a vital new milestone.

21. The policy for the advancement of women was therefore thrust to the forefront of national concerns and as such gained unprecedented momentum.

22. In an address delivered on 10 July 1997, President Ben Ali declared that "the gains achieved for women are the product of our quintessential choices, for it is our view that reform cannot take place without women and that a nation can make no gains without strengthening the gains of women", a credo which he confirmed on 30 July 1997 by means of a solemn undertaking to "reject all domination of women and the forfeiture of any of their rights".

Equality: a dimension of the national identity

23. The advancement of women's rights is a fundamental dimension of the new social order promised by the new era, which stems from a cultural choice aimed at ensuring that women, as human beings and full citizens, enjoy the individual right to human dignity and the conditions for its achievement.

24. The equality of men and women is, however, acknowledged as a basis of the Tunisian national identity and as a specific feature of Tunisian culture, which is essentially characterized by a dual quest to preserve the authentic values of Arab and Muslim culture and interact with the universal values of the modern-day world.

25. Women's rights have a solid legal and institutional basis owing to their correlation with the democratic achievements and the requirement of respect for human rights, which are a prime concern of the public authorities.

Articles 1, 2 and 3: Definition of discrimination and obligations of States

Article 1: Definition of discrimination

"For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

Article 2: Obligations of States

"States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

"(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

"(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

"(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

"(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

"(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

"(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

"(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women."

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Article 3: Obligations of States

> "States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men."

I. The gains of independence

26. The Personal Status Code, promulgated on 13 August 1956 and amended on numerous occasions, abolished polygamy (failure to comply with this provision is punishable by law as a criminal offence); instituted legal divorce, prohibited repudiation and granted divorce rights to both spouses; set the legal marriageable age for a young woman at 17, with the proviso of her consent; granted the mother, in the event of the father's death, guardianship over her minor children; instituted, in matters of inheritance, a mandatory bequest in favour of the daughter's children if she should predecease her father; and further instituted statutory reversion, whereby an only daughter inherits her parents' estate in its entirety.

27. The Constitution enshrines the principle of legal equality between the sexes (arts. 6 and 7) and subsequent laws laid down the economic, social, political and cultural rights of women.

28. The universal accessibility of education, the establishment of a national programme of population control based on the widespread distribution of contraceptives and the introduction of a law authorizing abortion have together created the objective conditions which favour the true emancipation of the female population.

29. Alongside the progression of its internal law, Tunisia has ratified most, if not all, of the international conventions which are directly or indirectly concerned with women's rights in both public and private life.

30. Of these conventions, the most significant are the International Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (cf. the initial report submitted by Tunisia for consideration by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)).

II. The democratic stimulus to women's rights

31. The change in the country's political administration in November 1987 engendered a major process of reform and modernization of the nation's legal and institutional system, one of the priority objectives of which was to promote the fundamental rights of women. On the basis of an approach whereby women's rights

are considered part and parcel of human rights, the texts promulgated reaffirm the egalitarian policy and clearly define the role which women are expected to play in the dynamics of change.

II.1. Basic texts

Inadmissibility of discrimination: a constitutional principle

32. Following the amendments introduced pursuant to Constitutional Act No. 97-65 of 27 October 1997, the Constitution strengthened the principle of the equality of citizens by explicitly decreeing, by way of the amendments made to articles 8 and 21, the inadmissibility of discrimination between the sexes.

33. The inadmissibility of discrimination is now a fundamental principle of every political organization in the country. New article 8 provides that:

> "Political parties shall respect the sovereignty of the people, the values of the Republic, human rights and the principles relating to personal status. Political parties shall undertake to ban all forms of violence, fanaticism and racism, as well as all forms of discrimination.
>
> "A political party may not fundamentally base its principles, objectives, activities or programmes on any religion, language, race or sex."

34. Determining the conditions to be fulfilled by any candidate wishing to stand for election, article 21 places descent through the mother on an equal footing with descent through the father by providing that "any voter born of a Tunisian father or a Tunisian mother and having attained 23 years of age shall be eligible for the Chamber of Deputies".

35. The law governing political parties, promulgated on 3 May 1988, or in other words, six months after the turning point of 7 November 1987, states as one of the conditions for the organization of political parties "the need to respect a certain number of values, including primarily human rights and the principles relating to personal status".

II.2. New legislative achievements in the field of fundamental rights

36. A new turning point for women's rights dawned on 13 August 1992 with the announcement by the President of the Republic, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, of a series of legislative reforms aimed at adapting the law to the political choices of the new era, particularly in regard to human rights.

37. The Personal Status Code, the Nationality Code, the Criminal Code and the Labour Code underwent a series of reforms following the measures announced on the occasion of Women's Day on 13 August 1992 and adopted in July 1993 by the Chamber of Deputies.

38. Whereas the reform of 1956 was dictated by the concern to restore the human dignity of women, the reform of 1992, although continuing along the same lines, stemmed directly from Tunisia's adherence to human rights principles and its

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firm wish to further strengthen women's rights. The adopted reform aimed not only to eliminate any discriminatory provisions which still persisted in the legislation but also to guarantee to women the effectiveness of their rights in both private and public life. In addition to strengthening and consolidating the principle of legal equality, the reform established a new legal rule of the "partnership" or duty of cooperation between spouses, which has been progressively affirmed as one of Tunisia's referential values since the 1990s.

39. Two major laws, adopted in 1997 and 1998, substantially strengthened the rights of women as persons, namely the law concerning the patronymic name of natural or abandoned children and the law organizing the regime of the joint estate of husband and wife.

II.2.1. Rights in matters of personal status

40. Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 amending certain articles of the Personal Status Code substantially strengthened the rights of women as individuals, as well as the rights of daughters, wives and mothers. The amendments improved the balance in the relationship between a married couple in regard to legal status and the management of family affairs on the basis of two fundamental rules: equality and partnership.

41. The Code of Private International Law, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 98-97 of 27 November 1998, confirmed the move in this direction by abandoning the principle of discrimination in favour of the husband (cf. para. 48).

(a) Partnership and reciprocity in a married couple

42. In article 23 of the Personal Status Code, the provision that "a wife shall respect the prerogatives of her husband and shall owe him obedience" is replaced by a provision which obliges each spouse to treat the other with consideration and cooperate in managing the family's affairs. New article 23 provides that "each of the spouses shall be considerate of, maintain good relations with and avoid causing injury to the other".

43. The move to eliminate the notion of submission is a fundamental measure which represents a break away from the former system of reference based on the treatment of women as inferior beings. New article 23 further provides that both spouses "shall cooperate in managing the family's affairs, the proper education of their children and the conduct of their children's affairs, including education, travel and financial transactions".

44. Another major innovation in comparison with the former system of reference lies in the obligation, introduced in article 23 as a result of the 1993 reform, for the wife to contribute to the family's expenses. The creation of such an obligation constitutes a recognition of the economic role of women, bringing with it a new order to the status of the family. Although the husband admittedly remains at the head of the family, no relationship of domination is implied, since his position as such is no longer based on the wife's duty of submission, which has been eliminated. On the contrary, it is based on his larger economic role, since it is his responsibility to "provide for the needs

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of his wife and children to the extent of his means". The position of head of family is no longer a right which is granted to the husband at the expense of his wife. Instead, it is an economic function and a responsibility linked to the duty incumbent on him to provide for the needs of his wife and children (according to the 1999 survey of population and employment, the economically active female population stands at 24 per cent).

45. The amendment of article 23 illustrates the reforming impact of the legislative measures of 13 August 1992, establishing as it did new legal rules in regard to management of the married relationship and conditioning a fresh view of family relationships based on the values of equality, mutual respect, reciprocity, solidarity and partnership.

(b) More balanced individual and civil rights

46. Although the legal marriageable age for young women is set at 17, a young woman nevertheless attains majority upon marriage in terms of her civil status and any civil and commercial acts which she may carry out. A minor bride is therefore in a position to be granted fresh advantages in matters of civil rights pursuant to new article 153 of the Personal Status Code.

47. The principle of reciprocity is also introduced in regard to the restitution of gifts in the event of breach of promise: article 2 provides that "each of the two fiancés shall have the right to the restitution of gifts" (and no longer the fiancé alone) in such an event, as well as following the dissolution of a marriage prior to its consummation (new art. 28 of the Personal Status Code).

48. In the case of a mixed marriage, the applicable law is no longer that applicable to the husband at the time when the marriage is concluded, as was required pursuant to the former Decree of 12 July 1956 regulating the Personal Status of Non-Muslim Tunisians, which gave precedence to the law applicable to the husband on the basis of sexual discrimination. Articles 47 (respective obligations of spouses), 48 (matrimonial property regime) and 49 (divorce) of the Code of International Private Law, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 98-97 of 27 November 1998, provide that the applicable law is now that of the most recent marital home, or, failing that, lex fori (the law of the country where divorce proceedings are instituted). The principle of gender equality in matters of civil status is thus established between spouses, even in the case of a mixed marriage.

(c) More balanced rights and duties in the field of parental prerogatives

49. Pursuant to new article 6 of the Personal Status Code, a mother now has the right to state her opinion concerning the marriage of her minor children: "The marriage of a minor shall be subject to the consent of his or her guardian and mother. If the guardian or mother refuses consent and the minor continues to desire the marriage, the matter shall be brought before a magistrate." This article therefore establishes joint parental authority in the interests of minors, who are thus spared the risk of a unilateral decision being made in regard to their marriage, a risk to which young women were more exposed.

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50. Article 67 of the Personal Status Code grants a mother the right of guardianship over her minor children in the event of the father's death. In the case of divorce, however, guardianship reverts entirely to the father, even if the mother has custody of the children. The new provisions of article 67, as amended in July 1993, introduce a complementarity between the prerogatives of custody and those of guardianship and grant _ipso jure_ to a divorced mother who has custody of her children new functions of guardianship in regard to the management of her children's civil and commercial affairs (travel, education and the management of financial accounts). Pursuant to this amendment, the judge may also grant all the prerogatives of guardianship to the mother and fully attribute to her the function of "guardian" "if the father proves unable to exercise or transgresses such prerogatives or if he abandons the home and has no known address, or for any reason prejudicing the interests of the child".

51. A divorced mother who has custody of her child now has a say in her child's affairs pursuant to new article 60 of the Personal Status Code, as amended by the Act of 12 July 1993, whereas this right was previously accorded only to the father or other guardian, who was necessarily male.

52. Pursuant to the reform of the Code of Obligations and Contracts, and in accordance with Act No. 95-95 of 9 November 1995 amending and supplementing certain articles of the Code of Obligations and Contracts, a mother is jointly responsible with the father for any intentional act of their child, whereas previously it was the father alone who had civil responsibility for an intentional act committed by his child that inflicted injury on others. The mother would assume such responsibility only after her husband's death. The legislator has introduced the principle of equality in this sphere, in consistency with the duty of cooperation by which both spouses are now bound to manage the affairs of their children and family.

(d) More balanced rights in matters of granting maintenance

53. The system of maintenance allowances has been revised so that, in principle, children of both sexes receive financial support until they come of age and exceptionally until the age of 25 in the case of children still in education, and beyond the age of 25 in the case of young women who have no source of income (new art. 46 of the Personal Status Code) or who receive no financial support from their husband.

54. In addition, maternal ascendants of the first degree (new art. 43) now have the right to maintenance, whereas only paternal relatives of whatever degree were formerly eligible for it. This introduces the principle of equity between the sexes concerning the rights of both lines of ascendants and the duties of spouses towards their ascendants (new art. 44 of the Personal Status Code).

II.2.2. Right to physical integrity: a fundamental right

55. The Penal Code contains important provisions aimed at protecting women against any form of violence. Serious penalties are therefore stipulated for debauchery and for procuring and prostitution, as well as for rape, which is subject to the heaviest penalty if accompanied by violence or armed threat or if the victim is under 10 years of age.

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56. Within the framework of the legislative reforms introduced in 1993, Act No. 93-72 of 12 July 1993 amending certain articles of the Penal Code substantially strengthened the right of women to physical integrity.

57. Former article 207 of the Penal Code granted the benefit of attenuating circumstances to a husband who murdered his wife or her accomplice caught in flagrante delicto of adultery in as much as the crime of voluntary manslaughter was regarded as a simple misdemeanour. Pursuant to this article, a husband who murdered his wife or her accomplice incurred a maximum penalty of five years, whereas the crime of voluntary manslaughter is normally subject to extremely heavy penalties, which can include life imprisonment. The Act of 12 July 1993 amending certain articles of the Penal Code repealed this article 207. As a result, this crime is now subject to the penalty applicable for manslaughter, namely life imprisonment if the manslaughter proves to have been voluntary.

58. A husband therefore no longer has a right of life or death over his spouse; the legislator is thus demonstrating his wish to preserve a woman's right to life, which is an imprescriptible human right, and place it above any factual consideration.

59. Pursuant to the aforementioned Act No. 93-72 of 12 July 1993, and in the same vein as the repeal of article 207, the bond of matrimony is now an aggravating circumstance for the punishment of violence against a spouse that warrants a heavier penalty, as stated in article 218, paragraph 2, of the Penal Code:

> "Any individual who wilfully commits assault or battery or any other act of violence or assault which is not covered by the provisions of article 319 shall be punished by imprisonment of one year and a fine of one thousand (1,000) dinars.
>
> "If the perpetrator of the assault is a descendant or spouse of the victim, the penalty shall be imprisonment of two years and a fine of two thousand (2,000) dinars. If there was premeditation, the penalty shall be imprisonment of three years and a fine of three thousand (3,000) dinars.
>
> "Withdrawal of the case by a victim who is an ascendant or spouse shall terminate any proceedings, trial or enforcement of penalty. Attempted assault shall be punishable ...".

60. These two measures introduced in the Penal Code are as fundamental as the above-mentioned reform of article 23 of the Personal Status Code, as they contrast radically with the traditional view of the relationship between husband and wife by affirming the individuality of the wife and freeing her from the conventional mix of ideas about women and the family. They also help to establish the law as a standard of individual and collective behaviour within the institution of the family, in addition to which they thoroughly restore the image of women by ensuring the preservation of their human dignity.

II.2.3. Right to transmit nationality

61. Until the reforms of 1993, a Tunisian woman married to an alien was not entitled to transmit her nationality to a child from the marriage, unless he or she was born in Tunisia or submitted an application for nationality one year before coming of age. The reform undertaken in the Nationality Code pursuant to Act No. 93-62 of 23 June 1993, however, accords this right to Tunisian women on the basis of a joint declaration made by the mother and father of the child. New article 12 provides that: "A child born abroad of a Tunisian mother and an alien father shall become Tunisian, provided that he claims that status by declaration within a year preceding his coming of age. However, before reaching the age of 19, the applicant shall become Tunisian upon joint declaration by his mother and father." (cf. para. 34)

Strengthening the principle of equality in this matter, the reform of the Constitution, adopted in October 1997 (Act of 27 October 1997) places descent through both the father and the mother on an equal footing by recognizing the right of any Tunisian born of a Tunisian father or a Tunisian mother, without distinction, to stand as a candidate for election.

II.2.4. Reproductive rights

62. Tunisian legislation accords to women the right to organize their sex lives and plan the birth of their children. The implementation of a national family planning strategy based on the widespread distribution of contraceptives and adequate legislation has assisted the rapid integration of this right as a component of the right to health.

63. Although abortion is freely permitted pursuant to the Act of 6 July 1965, followed by the Act of 26 September 1973, it is in no way construed as a method of contraception. The increasing prevalence of contraceptive use from year to year confirms that women are practising family planning.

64. Act No. 98-75 of 28 October 1998 concerning the attribution of a patronymic name to abandoned children or children of unknown parentage granted two rights to mothers in the case of children born out of wedlock (art. 1):

- The right to attribute her patronymic name to the child;
- The right to apply to the competent courts for attribution of the patronymic name of the father to the child, having first established proof, through testimony or through genetic fingerprinting, that such man is the true biological father of her child.

Article 1 provides that:

> "A mother having custody of her minor child whose descent is unknown shall attribute to him a forename and her patronymic name or shall seek authorization to do so in accordance with the provisions regulating civil status.

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> "The father, the mother or the Office of the Public Prosecutor may apply to the competent court of first instance for attribution of the patronymic name to the child where it is proven by admission, testimony or genetic fingerprinting that such person is the father of that child. In this case, attribution of the patronymic name shall provide entitlement to maintenance and a right of say in matters such as guardianship and custody where the child has not attained legal majority or after he has done so in the cases prescribed by law."

65. Irrespective of the considerations underlying these laws, whether preservation of the balance between demographic and economic growth (family planning) or recognition of the imprescriptible rights of the child (patronymic name), their promulgation in itself is an indicator of the emergence of the individual as a being with social value and as a legal entity.

II.2.5. Economic and social rights

Work: a fundamental right

66. Work is now more than ever reaffirmed as a fundamental right of women, the exercise of which prepares the way for the exercise of all other rights.

67. The right of women to work is guaranteed by the Labour Code, by all texts regulating the civil service and by the framework Collective Labour Agreement. The Labour Code, however, following the reform adopted pursuant to Act No. 93-66 of 5 July 1993, crossed a new threshold by explicitly establishing the inadmissibility of discrimination in its preamble. Article 5 *bis* reads: "No discrimination between men and women shall be made in the application of the provisions of this Code and the legislation adopted to implement it." A penalty is stipulated for any breach of this fundamental provision in accordance with article 234 and pursuant to Act No. 94-99 of 21 February 1994. In addition, certain provisions of the Code that were likely to have been construed as discriminatory, such as those in article 135 containing specific references to women's labour in the agricultural sector (Act of 5 July 1993), were repealed.

68. In order to comply with international standards, Tunisia ratified the Additional Protocol of 1990 to the Night Work (Women) Convention of the International Labour Organization.

69. In order to achieve the optimum conditions for a better accommodation of time between work and family, the legislator promulgated Act No. 94-88 of 26 July 1994, which established the methods by which national social security funds can help to finance day-care centres by contributing to the cost of caring for children whose mothers work outside the home.

70. With a view to strengthening the principle of gender equality in terms of both rights and duties, a new law was promulgated on 7 February 2000, namely Act No. 2000-17, repealing the provisions of article 831, article 1481, paragraph 2, and article 1524, paragraph 2, of the Code of Obligations and Contracts. Under these provisions, a spouse was required to give prior authorization for his wife to work, as well as his authorization for bail and, in the case of bail, for his wife to appear in court.

Right to education: combating de facto discrimination

71. In a similar vein, the general principles law concerning the education system, promulgated on 29 July 1991, introduced new measures aimed at combating discrimination against girls. On the strength of two essential provisions, it established the bases for an egalitarian education free of any stereotyped view of the relations between the sexes:

- The first of these, contained in article 1, paragraph 3, provides that one of the objectives of the education system is to "prepare pupils for a life in which there is no place for any form of discrimination or segregation on the basis of sex, social origin, race or religion".

- The second measure, stipulated in article 7, concerns the introduction of compulsory education, the main aim of which is to halt the phenomenon of school drop-out and strengthen the right of young girls to education. Until that point, education had been free but not compulsory. The reform introduced the notion of compulsory education and also added a deterrent: any parent who fails to enrol his or her child or who withdraws him or her from school before the age of 16 is liable to a fine (art. 5, para. 32).

72. The impact of the new provisions contained in the general principles law of July 1991 concerning the education system and the reform of the Labour Code, adopted in July 1993, illustrated a fundamental twin trend: first, the will to combat de facto discrimination against women and, secondly, the value accorded to education and work as fundamental rights, the exercise of which is regarded as a determinant of the attainment of other rights inherent to citizenship.

Rights of access to property

73. Following the measures adopted by the Government on 5 April 1996 and in accordance with the circular of the Ministry of Social Affairs of 9 May 1996 addressed to the social security funds, a married woman is able to take out a loan with those funds as the same time as her husband with a view to acquiring a single immovable property.

74. Act No. 98-97 of 9 November 1998 concerning the regime of the joint estate of husband and wife established a new system of property based on partnership and joint management within the couple. Bearing in mind the larger economic role now played by women in the family and in society, this system, while having no direct effect on the rules of succession, provides a solution which is intended to introduce some kind of balance in the matrimonial status of the wife.

Article 1 of this Act provides that:

> "The regime of the joint estate is an optional regime which the spouses may choose at the time of the marriage contract or at a subsequent date. The aim of this regime is to ensure that the spouses have joint ownership of any property or group of properties which are specifically intended for the family's own use."

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Spouses who adhere to the regime of the joint estate now share any property acquired during their married life.

II.2.6. Rights of the child

75. The interest and care devoted to Tunisian children were both fully articulated in the ratification, on 29 November 1991, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the promulgation, on 9 November 1995, of the Child Protection Code, article 2 of which provides that: "The Code guarantees children the right to benefit from various preventive measures in the social, educational and health fields and from other arrangements and procedures aimed at protecting them from all forms of violence, harm or physical, mental or sexual assault."

Article 1 defines the objectives of the Child Protection Code as follows:

> "1. To ensure that the child, while taking into account the special features which characterize his physical potential, his emotional tendencies, his intellectual capacities and his know-how, enjoys a level of protection guaranteeing preparation of the future generations by way of devoting attention to his care.
>
> "2. To raise the child to be proud of his national identity, be faithful and loyal to Tunisia, land of history and achievement, and have a sense of belonging to the national, North African, Arab and Islamic cultures, while immersing himself in the culture of the brotherhood of mankind and openness to others, in accordance with the requirements of scientific and educational guidelines.
>
> "3. To prepare the child for a free and responsible life in a united civil society, based on the inseparability of awareness of rights and respect of duties, where the values of equity, tolerance and moderation prevail.
>
> "4. To place the rights of the child to safeguarding and protection in the context of the broad national options which have made human rights into noble ideals that guide the will of Tunisians and allow them to develop and enhance their personal experiences, in accordance with human values.
>
> "5. To disseminate the culture of the rights of the child and create familiarity with the intrinsic characteristics of the child with a view to ensuring that he has a harmonious and balanced personality on the one hand and to instilling a sense of responsibility towards him in his parents, his family and society as a whole on the other.
>
> "6. To ensure by appropriate means that the child participates in everything of concern to him and to strengthen his rights by giving due consideration to his higher interest so that he acquires the virtues of work and initiative, the value of personal effort and a sense of his own responsibility.

> "7. To nurture in the child a sense of morality, while also developing in him a feeling of respect for his parents and for his family and social circle."

These principles laid down in the Child Protection Code illustrate Tunisia's wish to establish an egalitarian, just and tolerant society.

III. National mechanisms for the advancement of women

76. The issues surrounding women are a growing parameter in planning and assessment that brings specific structures into play. However, although that parameter is now increasingly incorporated into sectoral policies, it has proved necessary ever since the 1990s to develop a specific and integrated strategy for women and the family as a deliberate option in order to promote sustainable integrated development.

77. Given the wide extent of the reforms introduced, it was essential to ensure that behaviour was modified and the social fabric adapted. It was not simply a question of attuning the country to the new political choices laid down in basic documents such as the Declaration of 7 November, since it also entailed ensuring that these cultural choices which formed the basis of the new social order would be long-lived.

78. The policy of integrating women was to swell to its full proportions with the establishment in 1992 of a number of specific mechanisms that would set about improving the balance between the law and the personal experience of women.

III.1. Government mechanisms

III.1.1. The Ministry for Women and Family Affairs (MAFF)

79. The Ministry for Women and Family Affairs (MAFF) was initially a State Secretariat attached to the Prime Minister (1992). It then became a Ministry with special responsibility to the Prime Minister (1993) and ultimately a full Ministry (November 1999).

80. The role of MAFF is essentially to coordinate the activities of government institutions with a view to promoting the status of women and the family, furthering the integration of women into the development process, assessing any women's programmes which have been implemented and sustaining the impetus of women's organizations. In so doing, MAFF has the capacity to initiate both draft laws and development programmes.

81. In fulfilling its mission, MAFF is assisted by three main organizations: the National Council for Women and the Family, which is its consultative body, the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF), which is its scientific body, and the National Women and Development Commission, a planning and assessment body which is part of the national planning framework.

82. Among its objectives, MAFF specifically endeavours to promote equal economic and social opportunities for men and women, to change attitudes and to

ensure that human rights and women's rights in particular are actually experienced. To this end, it has developed the following vehicles:

- The advice and guidance unit, which endeavours to raise awareness of the rights of women and the family and which has improved its services with the introduction of a telephone helpline (1840) - 1308 and 1392, inaugurated on 13 August 1996 by the wife of the Head of State, Mrs. Leila Ben Ali.

- The national plan of action for the family, which encompasses a range of activities for which resources and other inputs are provided by a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions with the aim of strengthening the educational and social functions of the family, as well as its productive capacities and resources, in particular through the establishment of a mechanism, started in February 1999, that offers technical and financial support to microenterprises run by women and families.

- The information, education and communication strategy, which aims to establish human rights concepts in general and women's rights in particular, both in the family and in society, as well as to change attitudes by laying down the principles of equality and partnership.

- The unit for assessment of the impact of development projects on the status of the family, which seeks to develop planning that is better adapted to the needs of women.

- The programme to develop gender-disaggregated statistics, which was started in 1997 in conjunction with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), CREDIF and the National Institute of Statistics.

- The annual exhibition of craftswomen, which is particularly designed to help those working in the informal sector to improve the quality of their products and learn about new practices in commercial marketing.

- The national plan of action for rural women begun in February 1999 with the establishment of regional commissions and regional counselling and rural activity centres for women.

- The two networks of governmental and non-governmental representatives, consisting of male and female executive officers with responsibility for women's affairs in government institutions and in non-governmental organizations.

- The fund providing technical and financial support for women's microenterprises, which was established with support from the Canadian International Development Agency and which commenced its activities in 1999.

83. MAFF is still essentially a ministry with a horizontal action and drive. It has an input at the decision-making level, given that the Minister for Women

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and Family Affairs participates in ministerial councils and the Ministry's programmes are adopted by the Government. At the implementation level, its main input lies in social communication, since the development programmes which it initiates are mainly carried out by the ministries concerned and by non-governmental organizations, where desired.

84. In view of MAFF's ongoing expansion, its budget is constantly growing, having risen from 1,312,000 dinars to 1,835,000 dinars between 1996 and 1999, an increase of 32 per cent. Since 1996, MAFF has had a budget allocation for development. Owing to the enormous increase in this allocation, amounting to over 60 per cent in 1999, various activities were carried out within the plan of action for the family and the communication and awareness-raising plans periodically carried out by MAFF as part of the information, education and communication (IEC) strategies for women and the family.

III.1.2. The National Council for Women and the Family

85. Created in 1992, the National Council for Women and the Family (CNFF) is the consultative body on which MAFF depends and the framework within which partnership is developed among all the governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in matters of policy on women and the family.

86. Presided over by the Minister for Women and Family Affairs, it consists of representatives of government ministries, bodies and institutions, representatives of non-governmental organizations and national associations which actively promote women's rights and resource persons chosen for their abilities.

87. In September 1997, following a presidential measure, CNFF was strengthened by the establishment of three organizations:

- The commission for monitoring the image of women in the media. Chaired the President of the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT), it worked throughout the whole of 1998 to draw up a plan of action aimed at improving the image of women in the media. In particular, it recommended the introduction of a national prize for the best depiction of women in the media. Following this recommendation, the Tahar Haddad Prize for the best media production - whether in print, radio or television - was introduced pursuant to Decree No. 99-1037 of 17 May 1999.

- The commission for promoting equal opportunity between the sexes and monitoring the application of laws. Chaired by the Director-General of the National Office of Family Planning and Population (ONFP), it chose as a main focus of activity for 1998-1999 the status of women in employment and prospects on the eve of the twenty-first century. In its first report, it drew the major outlines of a sectoral plan of action for equal opportunities.

- The commission for preparing national and international women's and children's days. Chaired by the President of the Tunisian Organization for Education and the Family (OTEF), it meets regularly

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to coordinate activities and exchange views in order to ensure that women gain a more prominent position at national and international gatherings and to prepare national programmes for the celebration of national and international women's and children's days.

III.1.3. The National Women and Development Commission

88. The National Women and Development Commission was created by the Head of State in 1991 as part of the preparation for the Eighth National Social and Economic Development Plan (1992-1996) in order to compensate for the insufficient representation of female experts on the various sectoral commissions. Chaired by the Minister for Women and Family Affairs, this Commission brings together the national experts representing the ministerial departments concerned and the various institutions, organizations and associations active in women's affairs. Under MAFF supervision, it devised the strategy for the Eighth National Development Plan and subsequently for the Ninth National Development Plan (1997-2001).

89. The National Women and Development Commission devised the strategy for women in the Eighth National Development Plan (1992-1996) and ensured its follow-up and assessment under the supervision of MAFF and the Ministry of Economic Development.

90. The National Women and Development Commission devised a second strategy for women as part of the Ninth Plan of Development (1997-2001), a summary of which is annexed hereto.

91. As a result of this approach, gender analysis is institutionalized by all those sectors, which put in place the necessary structures and human resources for that purpose. Consequently, the progress achieved can be accurately measured and the sources of obstacles and hurdles identified while consolidating the national consensus concerning the integration of female human resources into all aspects of development.

III.1.4. The Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF)

92. Created in 1990, the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF) has gradually established itself as a forum of national and international exchange.

93. CREDIF's main tasks are to:

- Promote study and research on women and on their status in Tunisian society;
- Collect and ensure the dissemination of data and documentation relating to the situation of women;
- Produce progress reports on the status of women in Tunisian society.

CREDIF, a centre for research on women

94. CREDIF has set up an office for monitoring the status of women as a means of constantly observing and assessing the status of women with a view to throwing the most reliable light possible on the reality and progress of that status by carrying out studies and surveys, writing annual reports and organizing national or regional seminars.

95. Within this office, CREDIF has established a mechanism for monitoring the image of women in the media, which serves as a framework for analysing the content of the messages conveyed by the media in order to study how Tunisian society perceives the role and status of women.

96. CREDIF has already produced several reports on women: Femmes de Tunisie: situation et perspectives (1994); Femmes rurales de Tunisie (1995); Femmes et ville (1996); and Femmes et culture (1997). It has also published various studies and research papers: Femmes du bout des doigts: les gisements de savoir-faire féminin en Tunisie; Le potentiel économique des femmes en Tunisie; Les femmes tunisiennes et le cinéma: silence, elles tournent; Mobilité, fecondité et activité des femmes en milieu rurale tunisien; and Le statut juridique de la femme tunisienne.

CREDIF, a focal point for documentation on women

97. CREDIF has established a database and information network on women, as well as a women's bibliographic database and a computerized library providing access to databases on women in Tunisia, North Africa, the Arab world and the Francophone world. As a result of information exchange agreements between various institutions which serve as information sources on women in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, CREDIF has established two information networks on women: the information network on women (RIF) and the North African information network on women (REMIF). CREDIF also offers access to its library and databases for students, researchers and specialists.

CREDIF, a centre of excellence

98. Chosen by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as a centre of excellence, CREDIF has run a training course for Arab and African women on the subject of gender, population and development since 1996.

99. In 1997, with the support of UNESCO, CREDIF established an international chair of studies on the status of women, under the auspices of which international conferences attended by researchers, university lecturers and others concerned with the status of women are held. Moreover, it offers training periods in Tunisia, study visits to Tunisia and training sessions designed to introduce "gender analysis" into the areas of research, planning and organization.

100. It also runs a training course for Tunisian women executives in three modules: the first concerns on career development, the second provides an introduction to the "gender and development" approach and the third focuses on the psychology of work and the management of human resources.

CREDIF, a forum for encounter and dialogue

101. In addition, CREDIF regularly initiates all manner of communication activities in order to raise awareness of women's rights in Tunisia and elsewhere and of the women's talents which are emerging on the country's cultural and artistic scene, in which connection several works have been published.

102. CREDIF also makes its premises freely available to all women's non-governmental organizations for the purpose of holding meetings and forums, thus serving as a means of promoting a civil life and democratic debate.

103. Every two months, CREDIF publishes a bilingual magazine, Info-CREDIF, in the French and Arabic languages.

III.1.5. Women representatives

104. Within the framework of the measures adopted by the President of the Republic on 13 August 1992, six women were appointed as ministerial representatives. These appointments improved women's access to decision-making positions. In 1998, a total number of 14 women held such ministerial staff positions.

105. The women representatives report back to the Ministry and participate regularly in all the communication and action research activities initiated by MAFF (particularly training courses on the gender approach). They also ensure regular follow-up of the strategy for women and the national plan of action for the family.

106. Following a measure introduced by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on 10 November 1997, the composition of the regional development councils were required to include at least two women executives chosen for their expert knowledge of the region. These women serve as regional staff members who report back to MAFF and who are assigned the task of following up its programmes, in particular the plan of action for rural women. MAFF convened their attendance at an initial seminar on the occasion of the celebration of 8 March 1999.

107. In 1998, the local councils designated a woman member to assume responsibility for the affairs of the family and older persons. MAFF convened their attendance at an initial seminar in December 1998 on the occasion of the National Day of the Family.

III.1.6. Regional structures

108. Regional commissions for the advancement of rural women were created in February 1999 in each governorate. Presided over by the governor of the region, each commission consists of the regional officers-in-charge from the different ministries working in the field of women's affairs, as well as resource persons, women executives and non-governmental organizations. Their task is to draw up a regional plan of action for rural women and to ensure its follow-up and assessment in conjunction with MAFF.

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109. A group of child protection officers has been created in the 23 governorates in accordance with the Child Protection Code, promulgated in November 1995. These officers, whose appointment commenced in 1998, are a vital partner with MAFF in protecting and following up the rights of young girls in the different regions.

III.2. Civil society mechanisms for the advancement of women

III.2.1. Permanent Secretariat for Women's Affairs in the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) (Constitutional Democratic Assembly)

110. Created in 1992, this Permanent Secretariat ranks second in the party hierarchy after the General Secretariat, which has overall responsibility for over 1,500 women's units throughout the country. With the help of these units and the concerted action of 24 assistant secretaries-general in charge of women's affairs in the regional offices, the Permanent Secretariat plays a major role in raising awareness at the grass-roots level, in mobilizing female elites and in bringing about changes in attitude.

III.2.2. Vocational organizations

111. Within the framework of the country's large vocational organizations, Tunisian women have rallied together in order to improve the defence of their specific interests. These organizations include: the National Council of Women Heads of Enterprises (CNFCE), created in 1990 as part of the Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA); the National Women Cultivators Federation (FNA), created in 1990 as part of the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries (UTAP); and the National Women Workers Committee, created in 1991 as part of the General Tunisian Labour Union (UGTT), which is the central trade union organization (see art. 7: political and public life). CNFCE and FNA are established country-wide through their regional branches.

III.2.3. Women's non-governmental organizations

112. Since 1989, over 20 women's non-governmental organizations working in the various political, economic, social, cultural and scientific fields have come to light. The most recently established, in 1998, was the Women and Sciences Association (see the development in art. 7: political and public life).

113. Founded in 1965, the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT) is one of the four main national organizations active in national politics. It sits in the same capacity as UTICA, UTAP and UGTT on all the higher consultative councils.

III.2.4. Non-governmental organizations active in development

114. Several non-governmental organizations which are active in the field of development and the fight against poverty in rural and urban fringe environments and which endeavour to provide impetus to the dynamics of community development have channelled their activities towards women's needs. These non-governmental organizations include the Association for the Improvement of Work and Housing (APEL), El Kef Regional Development Foundation, the Self-Development Support Association (ASAD), Environment and Development in the Arab World - Tunisia

(ENDA), the Tunisian Social Solidarity Union (UTSS) and the Tunisian Federation for Community Development (FTDC).

III.3. Partnership with non-governmental organizations

115. With respect to the partnership between ministerial departments and non-governmental organizations, the Tunisian system of legislation was strengthened by Decree No. 98/1152 of 25 May 1998, which established ties of partnership, cooperation and interaction with such organizations. Accordingly, agreements on the implementation of selective projects were signed between the Minister for Women and Family Affairs and various non-governmental organizations working in the interests of women or development, which helped to establish the foundations of true partnership between governmental and non-governmental organizations in regard to the objectives for the advancement of women and the family.

116. The numerous projects implemented within the framework of these agreements concerned the fight against poverty, the development of women's economic potential, support for the productive activities of rural women and the improvement of living conditions for families living in disadvantaged areas.

117. Within the framework of implementing the national plan of action for the family, MAFF has constituted the "network of non-governmental reporting staff". The non-governmental organizations active in the fields of women and the family are also called upon to serve as an interface for MAFF in regard to operation of the fund providing technical and financial support for microenterprises run by women and families, which was set up in 1999.

118. The National Council for Women and the Family has been gradually affirmed as a special tool of the partnership between MAFF and non-governmental organizations.

IV. Bodies for the protection of women's rights

119. In addition to the bodies which, at different levels and in the different sectors, are endeavouring to advance women's rights, Tunisia has established a group of specific and innovative bodies with a view to protecting and promoting the effective implementation of women's rights.

IV.1. The family magistrate

120. The office of the family magistrate was created pursuant to new article 32 of the Personal Status Code. Such magistrates are chosen by the presiding judge of the court of first instance from among its deputy presiding judges in order to pursue reconciliation attempts and ensure that legal divorce proceedings progress smoothly. The family magistrate must personally ensure that both spouses are notified of the course of such proceedings, a provision which is intended to eliminate any possibility of divorce by default, specifically by guaranteeing to wives the right to be informed of the proceedings under way. New article 32, paragraph 3, provides that: "If the defendant does not appear and has not been personally notified, the family magistrate shall postpone consideration of the matter to a later hearing and shall request the assistance

of such other person as he deems appropriate with a view to personally notifying the party concerned or determining his actual domicile in order to bring him before the court."

121. In a similar vein, the newly introduced article 32 bis of the Personal Status Code establishes a measure intended to deter any malicious scheming and discourage any attempt to impede legal divorce proceedings, of which women are generally the victims. This article states that: "A spouse employing fraudulent misrepresentation to prevent notification of the other spouse shall be subject to a penalty of imprisonment for one year."

122. The reform of the stages of legal divorce proceedings was motivated by the concern to ensure better protection for women, children and the family. Where there are one or more minor children, the family magistrate is required under new article 32 to hold "three reconciliation hearings (and no longer one only) at an interval of at least 30 days between hearings", the evident concern being to instil a greater sense of responsibility in spouses who are in dispute and to protect the right of minor children to a balanced life in which both parents are actively involved.

IV.2. The maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund

123. A wife benefits from the right to the financial support of her husband from the time of consummation of the marriage until expiration of the period during which a wife is not permitted to remarry if the marriage is dissolved as a result of divorce or the husband's death (arts. 28 and 38 of the Personal Status Code). In addition, pursuant to Act No. 81-7 of 18 February 1981 amending certain articles of the Personal Status Code (arts. 31 and 53), a husband who is pronounced to have divorced his wife on a whim is required to pay a divorce allowance to the divorced woman as compensation for the material damage which she suffered. Unfortunately, women were not always able to benefit from this right owing to the difficulties entailed in enforcing judgements delivered in their favour. Faced with these difficulties in applying the law and taking into account the adverse repercussions of the non-payment of maintenance and divorce allowances on the equilibrium and well-being of the family, a fund guaranteeing the payment of maintenance and divorce allowances for divorced women and their children was created pursuant to article 53 of the Personal Status Code, as amended by the Act of 12 July 1993, on the personal initiative of the Head of State.

124. Instituted pursuant to Act No. 93-65 of 5 July 1993, the maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund is managed by the National Social Security Fund (CNSS). In accordance with the conditions set by the law creating the Fund (art. 53 of the Personal Status Code), it is responsible for paying the amounts of any maintenance or allowance which are the subject of final judgements in favour of divorced women and their children and which remain unenforced owing to the persistent failure of the judgement debtor to make payment.

125. Decree No. 16-55 of 9 August 1993 organizing this fund provides that: "The fund shall pay the maintenance or allowance to those entitled to it monthly within two weeks from the date of submission of the request in proper form" (art. 2). Moreover, "the fund shall assume the rights of those entitled to the

maintenance or allowance with respect to the person owing the amounts due under a judgement. It shall have the power to institute recovery proceedings for those sums up to the amount it has paid."

126. The maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund is financed by a contribution from the State budget, by recovery of the maintenance or divorce allowance payments and lateness penalties from debtors, together with the costs of recovery, by income from the fund's invested capital and by donations and bequests (art. 7).

127. Pursuant to article 8, "the National Social Security Fund shall have the right to take any action and institute any legal proceedings appropriate to the protection of the rights of the maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund. It shall be required to be represented in all cases to which it is a party."

128. Anxious to strengthen and develop the services of the maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund, on 11 August 1997, at the end of a select ministerial council meeting presided over by the Head of State, the Government adopted a series of measures aimed at rationalizing its operation and the services which it provided. These measures concerned:

- Allocation by the State from its own budget of an annual budget amounting to approximately 1 million dinars (about US$1 million) with a view to addressing the deficit shown by the fund as a result of the volume of payments disbursed;

- Harmonization of the legal provisions relating to the granting of maintenance in accordance with new article 46 of the Personal Status Code, which provides that "a daughter shall continue to be entitled to support as long as she has no resources and is not the responsibility of her husband";

- Rationalization of the activities of the fund by means of the following measures:

  - The fund shall make uninterrupted payment of the amounts to the beneficiaries, except in extreme cases where recovery proves impossible;

  - The fund shall take the place of the beneficiaries in regard to making court applications for confirmation of the offence of family abandonment (such beneficiaries are no longer required to provide the fund with a statement from the courts every three months confirming the offence of family abandonment);

  - An executive staff member is assigned to follow up the activities of the fund in each regional office of the National Social Security Fund.

Network of regional coordinators

129. In order to give effect to these decisions, a network of 23 regional coordinators was established and various measures were taken to simplify the

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procedures for granting maintenance pursuant to the Decree of 9 August organizing the fund (amendment of 16 March 1998 by Decree No. 671/98). Similarly, in accordance with a joint circular of the Ministers of Justice and Social Affairs, dated 24 November 1997, which was distributed by their respective offices and which called for better training and improved assistance for beneficiaries, numerous social measures were adopted to:

- Assist women beneficiaries in compiling their dossiers and obtaining the routine documents to be submitted to the fund;
- Ensure that needy families benefit from assistance programmes and free care;
- Take action to help women whose allowance has been suspended owing to failure to submit documents to the fund.

130. In its concern to protect the rights of vulnerable women, in 1999, MAFF carried out a survey of a representative sample of women in every governorate of the Republic who benefited from the services of the fund. The facts brought out by this survey were that:

* 90 per cent of the women interviewed are convinced that the fund plays an important role in protecting their rights;
* 70 per cent of women beneficiaries are unemployed;
* 88 per cent have no resources other than those provided by the fund;
* 79 per cent are illiterate or have only a primary school education.

131. Between the time of its establishment and the end of the 1998 financial year, the fund has benefited a total number of 6,282 women, 5,143 of them in connection with maintenance and 1,134 of them in connection with the divorce allowance.

132. The establishment of this fund constitutes a major innovation which significantly illustrates the concern of the legislator to protect the rights of divorced women, while safeguarding the right of mothers and of children whose parents are divorced.

IV.3. Child protection officers

133. Pursuant to article 28 of the Child Protection Code, the post of child protection officer was created in every governorate, together with the potential for the creation of one or more further posts in each individual governorate on the basis of the needs and density of the population.

134. Pursuant to article 30 of the Child Protection Code, the child protection officer is responsible for assuming "a task of preventive action in all cases where it is proved that the health of the child or his physical or mental integrity is threatened or endangered owing to the environment in which he lives

or to acts which he carries out or as a result of ill-treatment to which he is subjected ...". This professional body first began to operate in 1996.

135. Article 20 of the Child Protection Code provides that:

> "The following in particular are regarded as difficult situations which threaten the health of a child or his physical or moral integrity:
>
> (a) The loss of parents in the case of a child who remains without family support;
>
> (b) Exposure of the child to negligence or vagrancy;
>
> (c) A manifest and ongoing lack of education and protection;
>
> (d) Habitual ill-treatment of the child;
>
> (e) Sexual exploitation of the child, whether boy or girl;
>
> (f) Exploitation of the child in organized crimes within the meaning of article 19 of this Code;
>
> (g) Exposure of the child to begging and economic exploitation of the child;
>
> (h) The incapacity of parents or those with custody of the child to ensure his protection and education.

136. The child protection officer is in a position to acknowledge any threat experienced by children within the meaning of article 20. Pursuant to article 35, he has the power to carry out investigations and take urgent and appropriate measures on account of the child and produce a report for submission to the family magistrate.

137. In the event of threat, the child protection officer may decide:

- Either to allow the child to remain with the family while taking the necessary measures to eliminate the source of threat;
- Or temporarily to place the child with a foster family or in any other appropriate social and educational institution.

138. In addition, the Child Protection Code introduced a "duty to inform" whereby every person, including those bound by professional confidentiality, is required to inform the child protection officer of anything which is "likely to constitute a threat to the health of the child or to his physical or moral integrity within the meaning of article 20, paragraphs (c) and (d), of this Code".

139. Pursuant to articles 51, 52 and 54 of the Child Protection Code, a new preventive function is assigned to the family magistrate, to whom the case of a child at risk may be referred following a straightforward request from the

children's magistrate, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, public social services or public institutions concerned with child affairs. He may order any measure which is useful in determining the needs of the child (such as medical examination or temporary removal from the family) and maintaining its primordial interest.

IV.4. Advice and guidance units

140. Since 1992, citizens' relations bureaux have been created in all the ministerial departments and governorates of the Republic.

IV.4.1. The MAFF advice and guidance unit

141. This unit deals with over a thousand requests annually and endeavours to raise awareness of the rights of women and the family. It strengthened its services with the establishment of a telephone helpline (1840) - 1308 and 1392, which is intended to assist citizens in availing themselves of the Ministry's services. It has two lines: 1308, which provides facts, information and practical knowledge on health, family planning and personal status; and 1392, which receives and deals with requests from women citizens concerning marital and family relationships, with the help of a multidisciplinary team of consultants consisting of a psychologist, a jurist, a sociologist and a social worker. Help is sought from other specialists when the situation so requires.

IV.4.2. Advice units in women's non-governmental organizations

142. Some women's non-governmental organizations have an advice and legal guidance unit which regularly caters to women. Accordingly, UNFT, in addition to its permanent advice unit, provides a free legal consultation service one day a week through the Alliance of Women in the Legal Profession. The Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy (ATFD) also established a permanent advice unit which caters to women victims of violence and provides as part of its activities a free legal and psychological consultation service.

143. As for OTEF, it has formed a body of family mediators who provide help in cases of marital and family dispute by informing those concerned of their respective rights and duties.

Article 4: Temporary measures

> "1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.
>
> "2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory."

I. Positive action for women's access to decision-making

144. In order to promote women's access to positions of decision-making and policy-defining, various measures of positive discrimination have been adopted in recent years by the public authorities.

145. In 1992, the President of the Republic appointed a number of women to positions of responsibility among the departmental staff of each ministry in order to overcome the obstacles to the equality of women.

146. In 1997, a national equal opportunities commission was established within the National Council for Women and the Family. In the report which it presented at the end of 1998, the commission specifically recommended a series of measures to promote equal opportunities concerning access to employment, investment and positions of economic decision-making.

147. In 1998, a joint circular of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs, following a decision of the Head of State, invited regional governors systematically to appoint two women as designated members of each regional council.

148. In 1992, RCD, the majority party in power, established a permanent secretariat for women with a view to triggering an energizing force in the interests of women at every level of activity.

149. At the last RCD congress, at the instigation of President Ben Ali and as part of a restructuring move, the central committee adopted a resolution guaranteeing a minimum representation of 20 per cent for women.

II. Strategic planning: The Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan

150. In 1991, the Head of State, having noted that women were poorly represented in the sectoral committees involved in preparing the Eighth National Plan, took the step of establishing a national women and development commission in order to set in motion a specific strategy for incorporation into the plan that would explore the situation of women in the different sectors, as well as ways of accelerating their integration into those sectors.

151. From 1993 onwards, the National Women and Development Commission met regularly under the joint supervision of MAFF and the Ministry of Economic Development in order to follow up and assess the strategy for women under the Eighth Plan.

152. In the context of preparing the strategy for women, this Commission is subdivided into five sub-commissions: means and mechanisms for the advancement of women; development of female human resources; women and economic development; specific women's groups; and women and the family.

153. Preparation of the strategy for women was the subject of two consultations, one regional and one national, in which executive staff from governmental and non-governmental organizations took part, together with regional and local officials of both sexes, without distinction.

154. Incorporation of the gender dimension into the national plan at the preparation stage has multiple advantages:

- At the sectoral planning level, since the sectoral departments take appropriate measures to ensure attainment of the objectives set;
- At the budget level, as the sectoral departments also undertake to allocate the funds needed to implement such measures;
- At the assessment level, since the annual involvement of all sectors in assessing the national plan ensures that they maintain their vigilance and promote interest in the gender issue.

155. As a result of this approach, gender analysis is institutionalized across all sectors, which set up the necessary facilities and provided the human and material resources needed for that purpose. Consequently, the progress achieved and the source of any obstacles or impediments may be accurately gauged at the same time as strengthening the national consensus concerning the integration of female human resources into all aspects of development.

156. Based on the outcome of the assessment of the Eighth Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996), by means of which substantial achievements were made in the legislative and institutional fields, the National Women and Development Commission believed it necessary to continue, within the framework of the Ninth National Development Plan (1997-2001), the positive action undertaken for the benefit of women with a view to consolidating their gains and giving impetus to those areas which still fell short of matching women's aspirations.

157. As a result of their joint and complementary activities, MAFF, CREDIF, CNFF and the National Women and Development Commission gradually succeeded in forming part of the guidelines for the national development plan by starting up new programmes and plans of action targeted specifically at women with a view to promoting equal opportunities between the sexes in all fields.

158. The National Women and Development Commission, MAFF, CREDIF and the National Council for Women and the Family have already worked successfully to establish an initial national plan of action for women for the period 1992-1996, despite the lack of statistics and analytical gender-disaggregated data.

159. The assessment of the strategy for women in the Eighth Plan and the development of a new strategy for women provided the opportunity to consider ways of enhancing the efficiency of the mechanisms themselves for the advancement of women and of the activities undertaken, as well as ways of possibly creating new mechanisms, in the light of the difficulties noted. Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which corresponds to the strategy for women in the Ninth National Development Plan (1997-2001), therefore coincided with the emergence of a full array of operational structures (restructuring of MAFF and CNFF).

160. The Ninth Development Plan (1992-2001) retained six priority objectives. These objectives are integral to the approaches and forecasts which emerged from

the national consultation concerning Tunisia's profile in the twenty-first century, in which connection one of the fundamental options is to strengthen the role of women in development as both agents and beneficiaries. The objectives also take account of the guiding principles outlined by the Platform for Action produced by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing.

161. These objectives are aimed at:

1. Improving the economic integration of women, particularly by ensuring that skilled women have access to the new technologies, as well as at improving the vocational qualifications of female human resources, achieving equal opportunities in training and retraining, encouraging women to embark on projects within the framework of the national economic guidelines and promoting equal opportunities in investment;

2. Pursuing the development of female human resources in the vital fields of vocational training, reproductive health and mental health;

3. Integrating policies for the advancement of rural women as part of a specific strategy by developing a national plan of action for rural women, supporting the productive activities of women in rural and urban fringe environments and combating poverty among women;

4. Successfully developing attitudes so as to instil the principles of equality and partnership by implementing an information, education and communication strategy aimed at all contributors;

5. Enhancing the role of women in civil society and their participation in public life by promoting and strengthening the fabric of women's organizations, encouraging women's involvement in clubs, associations and politics and supporting women's non-governmental organizations;

6. Promoting an appropriate methodology for preparing statistics by encouraging research on women, integrating the gender approach into the process of gathering information, analysing data and statistics and assessing the impact of development projects and programmes on women and the family.

162. In order to attain these objectives, development policies for women and the family during the period of the Ninth Plan are structured around the following core issues:

- Ways and means of promoting women;
- The development of female human resources;
- Women and economic development;
- The situation of migrant women;
- Women with specific needs;
- Promotion of the family.

163. The achievements of the strategy for women under the Eighth Plan, together with the forecasts for the five-year period 1997-2001, the measures planned and the quantitative and qualitative objectives to be attained, are assessed in the

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strategy for women in the Ninth National Development Plan, the text of which is annexed hereto.

164. The strategy for women has benefited from financial resources provided within the framework of the State budget or within that of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

National resources

Constituting as it does an integral part of the overall development strategy, the strategy for women benefits from resources allocated from:

1. The development budgets earmarked for the technical departments which actively promote women and which are responsible for achieving the sectoral objectives, both qualitative and quantitative, set by the strategy for women. It is, however, difficult to arrive at an overall estimate of this budget, which forms the main contribution to the strategy for women. A study could therefore be conducted to that end with the Tenth National Development Plan (2002-2006) in mind.

2. The budget earmarked for MAFF.

Resources within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation

165. The strategy for the advancement of women following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing has benefited from funds provided within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as follows:

1. Within the framework of bilateral cooperation with Sweden, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, amounting to an estimated sum of almost 6 million dinars;

2. Within the framework of multilateral cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, ESCWA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), amounting to an estimated overall sum of almost 10.3 million dinars.

These resources have been allocated in particular to implementing various projects aimed at generating sources of income, developing female microenterprise, introducing gender analysis, advancing the social and economic status of rural women, establishing an observatory to monitor the status of women, holding training courses for women executives and implementing a communication strategy targeted at the family.

III. National priorities in the post-Beijing context

166. Having already embarked in 1992 on implementing the first specific strategy for women as part of the Eighth National Plan for the period 1992-1996, Tunisia fitted perfectly into the dynamics of "equality, development and peace" that

were set in motion by the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995).

167. Following Beijing, the national plan of action was naturally developed as part of the strategy for women in the Ninth National Development Plan for the period 1997-2001 on the basis of the assessment made of the achievements and shortcomings of the first strategy. It also had the advantage of benefiting ipso facto from the State budget and having access to structures that were already operational, in this case:

- The Ministry for Women and Family Affairs for devising projects and programmes (including draft bills), as well as for managing the implementation of and giving impetus to sectoral activities;
- The National Women and Development Commission for drawing up major guidelines;
- The National Council for Women and the Family for coordinating, following up and conducting research into the consensus on the major projects initiated for women and the family;
- CREDIF for conducting and completing studies on the different components relating to the status of women.

168. The national priorities concerning the critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action have placed emphasis on:

(1) Strengthening the economic potential of women;
(2) Combating poverty and improving women's living conditions;
(3) Strengthening women's rights and combating sexist stereotypes;
(4) Promoting female human resources through sectoral programmes;
(5) Protecting girls;
(6) Strengthening the role of women in civic life and in clubs and associations;
(7) Protecting migrant women;
(8) Developing partnership and international cooperation through the exchange of expertise;
(9) Developing gender-specific indicators and ensuring that the gender approach is applied as a standard rule.

169. The Beijing Platform for Action and the Dakar Plan of Action have unquestionably served as catalysts in providing MAFF, CREDIF and the non-governmental organizations working in the field of women's affairs in particular with a conceptual framework within which to refine their ideas and readjust their approaches, thereby confirming Tunisia's active commitment to the work of the United Nations to promote women's rights.

170. The Beijing Platform for Action and the Dakar Plan of Action have encountered no real obstacles, as an institutional platform was already functioning and had proved itself within the framework of the Eighth Development Plan (1992-1996).

IV. Protection of maternity

171. The recognition of maternity as a social function constitutes one of the principles behind Tunisia's social policy, its health policy and its policy on women and the family.

172. The adoption of an integrated approach to health and social protection based on a forward-looking legislation and on specific programmes of prevention and care stems from the recognition of maternity as an essential social function.

173. This policy has produced significant achievements in prevention and protection in the field of maternal and child health, as well as social legislation ensuring the protection of mothers in work (arts. 11, 12 and 13).

174. In the field of health, the implementation of different national preventive health, health promotion and health care programmes for women in particular and the inclusion of reproductive health in over 90 per cent of basic health facilities constitute strategic advantages for the improvement of maternal and child health, as illustrated by the positive progress achieved in the indicators for women's health (see art. 12).

175. The employment legislation in Tunisia establishes the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination between the sexes. The amendments introduced in 1993 explicitly eliminated any ambiguity in that connection. The employment legislation also guarantees protection and special social rights to women as mothers and in specific work situations (see arts. 11, 13 and 14).

176. With a view to improving the accommodation of work and family responsibilities, the law specifically stipulates for women:

- The right to work part-time at their request, a measure which has no effect on periods of leave, promotion, allowances and retirement schemes;

- The right to temporary leave of absence for a period of two years, which may be renewed twice, in order to bring up one or more children who are under six years of age or who suffer from a disability which requires constant care;

- Receipt of the anticipated retirement pension after 15 years of service if the woman is responsible for three children under the age of 15 years or a severely disabled child and if the administrative authorities concerned are in agreement (cf. paras. 596-598).

Article 5: Combating stereotypes

> "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:
>
> "(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;
>
> "(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases."

I. Re-establishment of the role of women as agents of history

I.1. National Women's Day: an illustration of the political will to combat stereotypes

177. The fact that National Women's Day, which falls on 13 August in commemoration of the promulgation of the Personal Status Code on 13 August 1956, remains on the calendar of national celebrations is an example of the political will to maintain the social pressure to combat sexist stereotypes and old-fashioned behaviour. Being a public holiday and a day of rest, it is also testimony to the irreversible commitment of the entire national community.

178. Each year, National Women's Day is celebrated with pomp and marks a time when the cause of women is particularly remembered and promoted throughout the entire media.

179. All governmental and non-governmental organizations participate in the national programme of festivities, arranged by the National Council for Women and the Family, which takes place under the great patronage of the President of the Republic. The main activity of this programme is inaugurated by the presidential couple or the wife of the Head of State.

180. A further indicator of the will to ensure that women's rights remain on the long-term agenda is the fact that International Women's Day has been celebrated since 1993 and is also marked by a national programme which benefits from the attention devoted to it by the President of the Republic.

I.2. The exhibition of "Women through the ages"

181. As confirmation of the national interest in achieving the full integration of women into development, the public authorities are endeavouring to recapture the role played by women throughout the history of the nation.

182. Within the framework of the national programme "Tunis, cultural capital of the region", between 1 November 1997 and 1 January 1998, Tunis hosted an

original exhibition entitled "Women through the ages", which was extremely moving. The exhibition, which was held in El Abdellia Palace in Marsa (a northern suburb of Tunis) was jointly organized by the Ministry of Culture (National Heritage Institute) and MAFF. For the first time under one roof, it illustrated the role played by women during the Punic, Roman and Muslim eras. Throughout these eras, women had many focuses of interest, such as economic activity, art, culture and even aestheticism and the cult of beauty, thus demonstrating that they were not solely confined to domestic activities. On the contrary, they had an unquestionable social and public presence as shown by the precious ornaments and museum pieces lent for the occasion by the museums of Bardo, Sousse and Mahdia. A marriage contract dating from the thirteenth century and concluded in Kairouan, the Aghlabite capital, attested that Muslim women at that time were already able to demand monogamy as part of the contract. The El Abdellia exhibition highlighted the historic and cultural dimension of female emancipation in Tunisia.

II. The future generations: revision of school textbooks

183. In accordance with Act No. 91-65 of 29 July 1991 instituting reform of the educational system, one of the objectives of the system is to "prepare pupils for a life in which there is no place for any form of discrimination or segregation on the basis of sex, social origin, race or religion" (article 1, paragraph 3). Equality between the sexes is a fundamental principle in the field of education.

184. In accordance with this principle, the Minister of Education undertook a major rewriting of all the school textbooks used in basic education (from the ages of 6 to 16) in order to remove images which portrayed women as stereotypes or as inferior beings.

185. Having compared the school textbooks used before and after the reform (in the first to sixth years of school), a study of the image of women in Tunisian society, conducted and published in 1995 by UNFT, stated that:

> "The new school textbooks endorse this value of equality: everywhere is open to one and all. Girls have access to all the same positions as boys. All tasks are equally carried out by both ... the male learner, as well as perhaps his entire circle, whether actual or potential, is made aware of the fact that the status of victim, which is traditionally reserved for women, may also well apply to men. Conversely, the status of protector which is traditionally assigned to men may also be fulfilled by women ....
>
> "In addition, the constant presence of the female element on practically every page and in every text, illustration and new textbook, signals the firm will to ensure that women are more widely integrated into every aspect of social life. That presence is real and effective in surroundings governed by the law of democratic equality. Nothing is the preserve of one sex over the other. Everything can be symmetrical .... Equality before need, equality before error, simple random alternation of the same tasks: it is this which, in the new textbooks, effectively helps to break down taboos. In the new textbooks, the space devoted to the

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> family is not aimed at any one sex in particular. It is done in a way which shows a communal life where all tasks are carried out by all members, without any standard distinction. Everything leads to the thought that this approach, which is finely tuned to the aims of the education system, is likely to promote equality of the sexes and to create harmony between private and public life, between the internal and external, by subjecting them to the same ideal. There is no longer any sexual division of space. The human being, whether male or female, is no longer alone in facing the trials and tribulations of individual or collective existence. When it provides adequate preparation for life, school is life already."

186. In connection with school textbooks, the commission for monitoring the image of women in the media, which is attached to the National Council for Women and the Family, recommended an increase in the number of women experts participating in the committees responsible for developing and assessing school textbooks. It also recommended that the specifications for that task should incorporate a new clause which stipulated in particular the need to use works written by Tunisian, Arab or foreign women and show interest in the different roles assumed by women in all sectors of activity and in the different areas of private and public life.

187. At various levels, the textbooks for the second cycle of basic education (the seventh, eighth and ninth years) include texts which cover the important role played by women in national history and in Arab and Muslim history in general. Other texts extol the virtues of female emancipation and draw attention to the need to promote the status of women.

III. Role of the media

188. In Tunisia, the wish to advance the situation in accordance with the principles stipulated in the Personal Status Code has, since the beginning of independence, resulted in the greater use and true mobilization of all media, in particular the audio-visual media, in the interests of anchoring the egalitarian values guaranteed by the Code. Indeed, driven by a sustained political will, they have played the same determining role as laws in bringing about changes in attitude, so much so that a number of women's rights, such as the right to education, the right to birth control, the right to employment and the right to participation in public life, now seem to have taken firm root in Tunisia, as several studies have shown.

III.1. The audio-visual media

189. The Tunisian Radio and Television Organization (ERTT) devotes a great deal of air time to the concerns of women and the family. This is particularly true of the national radio station and the five regional radio stations which regularly broadcast programmes targeted specifically at women. These programmes, which are generally broadcast live and in which men also take part, provide the vehicle for discussions in favour of equality of the sexes and women's rights.

190. The volume of radio programmes aimed at women increased from 23 per cent to 30 per cent between 1994 and 1997, with one daily and nine weekly broadcasts.

In addition, almost 80 per cent of the contributions from citizens during live radio broadcasts are made by women and young girls, representing an extremely wide accessibility to live expression on air.

191. Over the past five years, Tunisian television has broadcast two programmes for women. The first, consisting of a series of 10 programmes screened in 1994, profiled women in different activity sectors. The second, entitled "Women and society" and screened between 1995 and 1997, was a weekly programme which gave the true facts about women and their diversity.

192. As for historical documentaries, in 1998, Tunisia produced and broadcast a television series of 10 episodes on illustrious women throughout both national history and Arab-Muslim history. Screened during the month of Ramadan, this series played a part in re-establishing the role of women in history. In addition, several other television productions aimed at a wide audience and broadcast at peak viewing times showed examples of men and women who lived their lives on a basis of equality while remaining fully attached to Tunisian cultural values.

193. Channel 21, which targets the youth audience, conveys the messages of equality even more cleverly, since over half of its presenters are young women. Without a doubt, the formula often adopted by this channel of using a couple to present cultural or entertainment programmes, as well as women reporters or presenters for sports programmes, contributes substantially towards breaking down stereotypes.

194. The specific concerns of rural and migrant women are also covered by the radio and television media. Whereas the regional radio stations are aimed at an audience of rural women and girls, the television station, Channel 7, which broadcasts by satellite, devotes two weekly programmes to migrant women.

195. Within the framework of the attention devoted to the concerns of rural women and girls, in January 1995, the African Training Centre for Journalists and Communicators (CAPJ), which is based in Tunis, organized a national symposium for the officials, directors, producers and presenters of the five regional radio stations on the theme of the "role of regional radio stations in promoting communication for rural girls and women".

196. The arena of Tunisian television is open to foreign television channels, free access to which is encouraged by the considerable number of users who receive programmes by satellite.

III.2. The written press

197. The study L'image de la femme dans les média et la société, conducted by UNFT, states that "the journalist output on women remains poor in quantity and uneven in quality" before concluding that the increase in the number of women journalists with a university education provides firm cause for optimism in so far as they continue to inject journalism with a female view and sensitivity to counterbalance the "male" perspective developed in the "news in brief" column in particular. For the moment, it is important to ensure a higher media profile for active women who participate fully in the country's development in the

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fields of politics, economics, culture and sport. Ultimately and inevitably, the increase in the number of women readers will lead the media decision-makers to cater for this market mix of both sexes and stop producing newspapers for men. A signal heralding this change is that some daily newspapers now have women's columns, which were non-existent when the study was conducted in 1992.

III.3. The feminine press

198. With the help of the subsidies allocated by the State, the feminine press has, over the past five years, made significant progress in terms of both quantity and quality. It includes, in particular, the magazines Femme, an organ of UNFT, Info-CREDIF, an organ of CREDIF, and Siwar, which is published privately. The regularity with which these magazines are published has improved, as has the quality of their media production (Femme is a monthly publication and Info-CREDIF and Siwar are bimonthly publications).

199. Other women's magazines have appeared, namely Echos-Mères, a bimonthly published by the Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM) since 1994, and Nuance, a monthly magazine with a high circulation which a private group has been publishing since 1995.

200. Other women's publications are produced by various women's organizations, such as Akalil and the Girl Alumni Association of the Rue El Pacha Lycée.

201. The number of women's publications equals that of the other specialist magazines published in Tunisia, of which there are six for children, three for science and three for agriculture.

202. Some print media publish a specific section for women, notably the weekly magazine Réalités, which publishes a women's supplement every fortnight.

203. In addition, the arena of the Tunisian media remains wide open to all Arab and foreign women's publications, a substantial number of which enrich the market.

204. In 1999, CREDIF mounted an exhibition on the development of the feminine press from the time of national independence to the 1990s, which highlighted the fight for emancipation and equality waged by women through the emergence of female writing in the national press.

IV. Role of women journalists

205. Since the end of the 1980s, the presence of women in the various information bodies has shown a rising curve, the proportion of professional card-carrying women journalists having increased from 16 per cent in 1987 to 25.15 per cent in 1998.

Increase in the percentage of professional women journalists

Year	Total number	Total number of women	Per cent
1994	730	164	22.4
1995	743	173	23.2
1996	779	184	23.6
1997	886	227	25.0
1998	938	236	25.15
1999	955	251	26.2

Source: Prime Minister.

206. The distribution of women journalists throughout the media as a whole shows that the intake is highest in the written press, standing at 33.5 per cent of the total number.

207. In terms of the percentage of women journalists now working in the main Tunisian media, ERTT ranks first, with 36.5 per cent in 1998 against 33.5 per cent in 1994, followed by Tunis Afrique Presse (TAP), with 27.2 per cent in 1998 against 25.6 per cent in 1994. In third place stands the written press, with 22 per cent in 1998 against 17.9 per cent in 1994.

Increase in the percentage of women journalists working in the main media

	1994			1998		
Media	Total number	Number of women	Percentage	Total number	Number of women	Per cent
TAP Agency	164	42	25.6	191	53	27.2
ERTT	188	63	33.5	178	64	36.5
Written press	378	68	17.9	453	102	22.5

Source: Prime Minister.

208. In regard to training for the profession of journalism and communication, the number of female students at the Institute of the Press and Information Sciences of Tunisia (IPSI) has relatively stabilized since the beginning of the 1990s, following a spectacular breakthrough during the 1970s and 1980s, which

led to an increase from 14 per cent of the total number in 1973/74 to 63.3 per cent in 1991/92, as illustrated by the following table:

Academic year	Total number	Number of males	Number of females	Per cent
1994/95	641	213	428	66.77
1995/96	695	221	474	68.20
1996/97	721	281	440	61.02
1997/98	721	234	487	67.54
1998/99	720	225	495	68.75

Source: Prime Minister.

209. In the audio-visual arena, the numbers of women are increasing in the different professions in the field of communications. In ERTT, women account for 25.5 per cent of the total number in a variety of professions - engineers, computer operators, journalists, producers and administrators - and for over 60 per cent of the overall number of presenters.

210. In terms of access to decision-making positions, the integration of women journalists into the media has failed to increase at the same pace as the feminization of the profession. Women more or less lag behind in relation to their male colleagues, depending on the media. At the TAP agency, 23 per cent of women employees have functional jobs and the share of women in the overall number of such jobs is only 17.3 per cent (21 out of 121).

211. In the public sector, particularly at ERTT and TAP, women journalists have established themselves on the basis of their skills and the quality of their media output. Several important positions which were previously an exclusive male preserve are now held by women journalists. ERTT thus has a women station director (Radio Jeunesse on three radio stations) and three women editors-in-chief respectively of the main news bulletin at 8 p.m., the regional news bulletin at 6.30 p.m. and the radio news bulletin on Radio Jeunesse, not to mention the numerous female producers and presenters of radio and television programmes.

212. In the written press, particularly the independent press, women's access to decision-making positions remains extremely limited, despite the quality of their journalistic output.

213. In terms of continuing training, women journalists, particularly at ERTT and the TAP agency, benefit to the same extent as their male colleagues from the opportunities for retraining and advanced training, both in Tunisia within the framework of the activities of the African Centre for the Training of

Journalists and Communicators (CAPJC) and abroad within the framework of international cooperation.

V. Women and the media

214. Aware of the need to narrow the existing gaps between the legislation and the personal experiences of women, a number of those involved in women's politics have devoted themselves to the problem issues surrounding the image of women in the media.

215. In November 1994, CREDIF hosted an Arab-African seminar entitled "Women and the media: access to expression and decision-making" as a prelude to an international symposium organized by UNESCO and held in Toronto from 28 February to 3 March 1995. This gathering provided the opportunity to place on record the achievements of women in the media and point out the shortcomings, particularly concerning access to decision-making positions.

216. In 1992-1993, the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT) conducted a study entitled L'image de la femme dans la société. This study was chosen by the UNESCO symposium in Toronto as one of five papers to be presented at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

217. Following this study, UNFT organized a national seminar in 1995 for all those holding positions of responsibility in the media.

218. On 8 March 1997, on the occasion of International Women's Day, MAFF organized a seminar on the theme of "Women and the media: towards a new partnership". A reference document on the status of Tunisian women in the media was produced for the occasion.

219. The gatherings organized for this purpose recommended that activities aimed at media professionals should be undertaken with a view to ensuring that they improved their approach towards women's issues. They also noted the limited access to decision-making positions for women professionals in the field of communications, particularly in the written press.

VI. Mechanisms for improving the media approach to women

VI.1. The commission for monitoring the image of women in the media

220. The commission for monitoring the image of women in the media was set up within the National Council for Women and the Family in September 1997 following a recommendation contained in the strategy for women in the Ninth Development Plan in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action. At the end of its first year of operation, it recommended in its first report, which was submitted to the President of the Republic, that a plan of action should be undertaken to improve the media approach to women's issues.

221. The commission also recommended that the institutions with responsibility for the advancement of women and the family, in this case MAFF and UNFT (which chairs the commission), should be represented in the national organizations in charge of the media output.

222. The commission further recommended that awareness-raising activities for communications professionals should be carried out and an annual prize introduced for the best media work as far as the image of women was concerned. Moreover, journalists should receive training in the gender approach in the culture of the media.

223. In accordance with the recommendations of this commission, between 1998 and 1999, MAFF held a number of discussion meetings with media professionals and with television scriptwriters in particular. In December 1999, MAFF also held a European-Mediterranean seminar on the theme of "Women and the media: towards a balanced image" in association with the African Centre for the Training of Journalists and Communicators (CAPJC) and with the financial support of the Delegation of the European Commission in Tunis.

VI.2. The CREDIF observatory for monitoring the image of women

224. In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and with the help of support from UNFPA, in 1996, CREDIF established a mechanism to monitor media material in order to evaluate the place accorded to women in the media (print and audio-visual). This mechanism consists of a mini-observatory which attempts to identify the main features of the image of women as portrayed in the different media with a view to monitoring "the representation of women and checking the accuracy with which their interests and concerns are presented".

225. Within this framework, in 1996, CREDIF held a series of workshops on women and the media which were attended by young male and female journalists and which aimed to raise their awareness and arouse their interest in writing first-hand on the personal experiences of women and the question of women in general.

VI.3. The Tahar Haddad Prize for a balanced image of women in the media

226. Following a recommendation of the Commission on Women and the Media, the Tahar Haddad Prize for the best media work - in print or on radio or television - was introduced pursuant to Decree No. 99-1037 of 17 May 1999 in order to reward the best media production in regard to the problem issues surrounding the image of women. The prize was presented to its first winner, a female television director, by the President of the Republic on the National Day of Culture on 27 May 1999.

227. This prize is awarded annually to a journalist or communicator in recognition of the quality of a piece of work produced during the year in question. Article 2 of the Decree establishing the prize defines the desired image of women as follows: "Any image of women which portrays them as human beings, individuals and citizens with duties who enjoy their fundamental rights as enshrined in the national legislation and international conventions shall be regarded as balanced: such an image shall necessarily reflect the various roles assumed by women in the different areas of public and private life in such a way as to contribute to overcoming the stereotypes in that connection."

VII. Human rights education

228. At all levels, human rights education is a national priority in the field of education in Tunisia, as is dissemination of the human rights culture. The Tunisian institutions of education (public and private, general and specialist), culture and information all help to instil the value of tolerance in today's generation, as well as in the future generations.

229. In order to ensure the most effective implementation of national and international texts, it is vital to give exposure and publicity to these rights so that all the different members of society may become familiar with and aware of their existence, their content and their usefulness.

230. A clear triangular relationship now exists between the prescriptive texts, their effective implementation and information based on awareness-raising and exposure. Tunisia has embarked on an extremely fruitful and effective experiment in the field of human rights education, at the level of both general education (basic, secondary and higher) and specialist education (the National College of Public Administration, the Higher Magistracy Institute, the College for the Forces of Law and Order, the Police and the National Guard and so on).

231. In 1995, a national commission for human rights education was established. Presided over by the Minister of Education, this commission comprises representatives of the main governmental and non-governmental players active in human rights education. MAFF is represented on the commission, which, in 1998, published a series of brochures on human rights in Tunisia on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

232. Other measures have been adopted to promote human rights education and women's rights in public institutions and in institutions concerned with security matters, including in particular:

- The creation within the Ministry of the Interior of a unit responsible for monitoring respect for human rights;
- The creation within the Ministry of Social Affairs of national centres for social protection;
- The creation of advice units in all ministerial departments and governorates;
- The provision of every newly recruited security agent with a code of conduct whereby he undertakes to respect the human rights rules and principles which it contains;
- The gradual integration of women into the institutions responsible for dealing with violence. Women have been integrated into most special technical fields, particularly in the criminal investigation department, where their numbers have increased tenfold.

VIII. The role of MAFF

VIII.1. The national plan of action for the family

233. Although concern for the family is not a recent phenomenon in Tunisia, the emergence of a specific family policy aimed at promoting the family is part of the vast enterprise of social modernization with a view to more effectively managing the changes of the twenty-first century and ensuring longer-lasting values of respect for human rights.

234. A national plan of action for the family has been under way since 1996 and relies partly on the resources and other forms of assistance provided by a number of government authorities and non-governmental organizations. This plan covers a range of activities aimed at strengthening the educational and social functions of the family in matters of marital relations, the socialization of children and promotion of the physical and mental health of family members.

235. With the ultimate aim of promoting a democratic model of the family that is governed by equality and shared responsibility, this plan centres around four core issues:

- Marital relations with a view to promoting cohesion and harmony within couples and more effectively preparing young people for marriage;
- The socialization of children with a view to guaranteeing that they are raised in a manner conducive to the development of their faculties and consistent with human rights values;
- The physical and mental health of the family with a view to protecting it from the risks of instability;
- The economics of the family, management of the household budget and development of the household resources.

236. In order to achieve these objectives, the national plan of action for the family is based in particular on developing an information and communication strategy which aims to change attitudes by laying down the principles of equality and parity and to ensure that the culture of human rights and civic responsibility become part of the family's living experience. This strategy bases its activities on the mass communications of radio, television and the press on the one hand and on the intermediaries working in the family environment on the other.

237. Within this framework, in 1996, the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs, in association with the German Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and ERTT, launched a multimedia awareness-raising campaign for parents and children under the title of "civic responsibility begins at home" which consisted of:

* Two radio and television advertisements encouraging families and couples to give priority to discussion in the management of family disputes. The first advertisement emphasized the need to encourage exchanges and communication between parents and children and allow children

the same right of expression as other family members. The second advertisement emphasized the opportunity for couples to establish and strengthen their communication and highlighted the impact and beneficial effects of that relationship on the harmony within the marriage and family.

* Two other television and radio advertisements were broadcast in 1997 and 1998 with the aim of promoting the fair division of tasks within the family, between the couple and between the different generations, without stereotyping. These advertisements encourage the interchangeability of roles and the socialization of children on the basis of this principle. Women's organizations and associations in particular echoed these messages by choosing them as themes for their members' discussion circles.

* A series of eight interregional seminars on training and awareness-raising in the field of communications for the social workers and intermediaries (teachers, social workers and staff of non-governmental organizations) who play an effective role in promoting dialogue and partnership between men and women within the family. Social workers, family conciliators and voluntary workers in non-governmental organizations are the main beneficiaries of these training sessions, four of which have been devoted to the socialization of children (dialogue, task-sharing and so on) and a further four to marital relations.

* The publication of guides disseminating information on the rights of women and girls:

- Les droits de la petite fille (Rights of the girl child) (1995 in Arabic and French);
- Le guide des droits de la femme en matière de sécurité sociale (Guide to women's social security rights) (1997 in Arabic, French and English);
- Le guide des jeunes en matière du Code du Statut Personnel (Young Persons' Guide to the Personal Status Code) (1998 in Arabic and French).

These aids are used by communication intermediaries to lend practical support to their awareness-raising activities.

In 1998, a study was carried out on the socialization of children within the family, together with a nationwide survey to determine the profile of Tunisian educators, the values imparted and the upbringing methods used within the family. At the end of this study, a communication plan was drawn up, one of the core concerns of which was to improve the skills of parents with a view to bringing up their children to be non-sexist and non-violent.

VIII.2. The MAFF communication strategy

238. In the reorganization of MAFF which took place five years after it first commenced operation, a general information, communication and public relations

office was set up, bearing in mind the important objectives of the national strategy for women in the field of information and communication.

239. In accordance with the priorities of the strategy for women contained in the Ninth Development Plan (1997-2002), MAFF is working to change attitudes by endeavouring to instil the principles of equality and partnership between the sexes in private and public life (cf. para. 237). While CREDIF focuses its activities on carrying out and publishing research on various aspects of the status of women, MAFF has developed a full range of leaflets and brochures which publicize the rights and achievements of women in Tunisia. These aids are very widely distributed in educational circles, as well as to young people and public intermediaries.

240. The series entitled Etre femme en Tunisie: réalités, perspectives et statut juridique (MAFF) had a print run of 12,000 copies, which were distributed to schools, young people and public intermediaries. In schools, the brochure on legal status was the subject of a lecture on women's rights given in 1994 on the occasion of International Women's Day.

241. Le guide des droits de la femme en matière de sécurité sociale (Guide to women's social security rights) had a print run of 10,000 copies, which were distributed to all public intermediaries and bodies working in the field of women and family affairs (advice bureaux in the ministries and governorates). A batch of copies in English and French was distributed to Tunisian expatriate communities and to the regional and international organizations cooperating with Tunisia.

242. Le guide des jeunes dans le Code du Statut Personnel (Young Persons' Guide to the Personal Status Code), which had a first print run of 20,000 copies in Arabic, employed a suitable approach to publicizing the main provisions of the Personal Status Code concerning engagement, marriage and divorce. In January 1999, it was the subject of discussion at a meeting of communication officers from the governmental and non-governmental institutions working in the field of women and the family. This meeting resulted in identification of the main target audience and the action to be taken in order to promote a universal culture of law and order. The French version of the guide was produced in 1999 and circulated to the Office for Tunisians Abroad (OTE), to non-governmental organizations for women migrants and to Tunisian consulates and embassies for the benefit of young generations of emigrants.

243. MAFF regularly organizes media campaigns on the occasion of national and international days in celebration of women and the family. In addition, the press briefings regularly organized by the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs, together with the celebration of National Family Day (11 December), International Women's Day (8 March), the International Day of the Family (15 May) and National Women's Day (13 August), have the effect of polarizing the attention of the media and swelling interest in issues relating to the advancement of women.

244. MAFF regularly collaborates with ERTT in preparing television programmes: family discussions, the redistribution of tasks among family members, the marital relationship, parent-child relations, women and employment, women's

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microenterprises and joint property have all been subjects of television debates on the two national television channels.

245. MAFF regularly organizes national, regional or international gatherings on aspects of the feminine cause which benefit from wide media exposure, particularly on the radio and television. Within this framework, an international seminar on the theme of "Women and the law, women and modern-day living" was held in July 1997 in association with the Ministry of Justice and an international seminar on the theme of "Women, science and technology" was held in November 1997 in association with UNESCO.

246. In association with ERTT, MAFF is currently engaged in finalizing the details of a family television programme to be screened in the year 2000. This bimonthly programme will attempt to respond to the family concerns and needs created by the political, cultural and social changes taking place in society. It will focus around the marital relationship, the socialization of children and the economics of the family. It will also serve as a vehicle for conveying and strengthening human rights values, in particular respect for women's rights, the rights of the child and the rights of older persons.

IX. The role of CREDIF

247. Act No. 93-1986 of 27 September 1993 defined the tasks of CREDIF as follows:

- To encourage studies and research on women and their status in Tunisian society, as well as on their contribution to development, in association with the competent national and international institutions, as well as to conduct such studies on its own account or on account of others in return for payment;

- To collect and ensure the circulation of data and working documents relating to the status of women, as well as provide information which emphasizes women's rights and widens their areas of participation, by organizing conferences, seminars, study days and exhibition days;

- To produce reports on the status of women in Tunisian society at the request of the competent authorities within the framework of developing the policy of the Government and its programmes in that connection;

- To give its opinion to such departments and organizations as may request it on any question concerning the status of women and to participate in an advisory capacity in the work of the different bodies established by the public authorities with a view to studying, organizing or promoting activities aimed at enhancing the status of women.

248. In the same vein, the communications strategy adopted by CREDIF centres around three core issues: the first consists of reasserting the value of women's cultural heritage and the role accordingly played by Tunisian women throughout national history; the second consists of making the facts on the

status of women available to the public; and the third concerns behavioural activities with a view to engendering a change in attitudes.

IX.1. Reasserting the value of women's cultural heritage

249. In 1993, CREDIF, in association with the Higher Institute of the History of the National Movement and with the assistance of the Kuwaiti Souad Al Sabah Fund, published a work entitled Mémoire de femmes tunisiennes dans la vie publique 1920-1960, which describes the unique destinies of 13 Tunisian women who, in areas ranging from politics to art, successfully defied the taboos of their time and made their mark on the contemporary history of Tunisia. Containing interviews with women by women, this book provides startling proof through these oral testimonies of the important role played by women in the national development of Tunisia.

250. In 1993, CREDIF also published a national directory of qualified women which identified women engaged in different fields of activity.

251. Through regular exhibitions of women's work in architecture, fine arts and other creative fields, CREDIF is striving to achieve recognition of the contribution of women to the trends in intellectual and artistic production and design. The first exhibition, organized on the occasion of the national women's festival in 1992, culminated in the publication of a catalogue entitled "Clin d'oeil plastik".

252. In this context, CREDIF, in association with the Canadian Organization for Solidarity and Development (OCSD), published a study in 1992 entitled Femmes du bout des doigts: les gisements de savoir-faire féminin en Tunisie, which paints a material picture of the entrepreneurial world of women in Tunisia. Through the portraits of 13 women country-wide, the work reflects the daily life of women at work, their love of their jobs and their inexhaustible talents.

253. The institution of a regular forum of encounters with women executives, women designers, women of letters and so on, known as "CREDIF circles" aims to broaden the thinking given to the concerns and positioning of women throughout every area of social life.

IX.2. Publicizing women's achievements

254. As part of its information activities, CREDIF has published a number of documents and communication aids in recent years. These include a brochure entitled Les droits de la petite fille (Rights of the girl child), published in association with UNESCO, which compares the Tunisian legislation on the subject with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and which is widely circulated in schools. They also include a leaflet publicizing the reforms of 13 August 1992, which has been reprinted several times and has an extremely wide guaranteed circulation.

255. In recent years, the research activities carried out in connection with monitoring the status of women have covered a variety of subjects, ranging from economic integration to rural women and women and the cinema. The results of

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such research are brought to the knowledge of the public through seminars and in publications which come onto the country's book market.

256. Within the framework of publicizing women's rights, CREDIF also regularly engages in communication activities on the national, regional and international scales. In this context, it organized an Arab-African seminar in November 1994, in association with UNESCO, on the theme of "Women and the media: access to expression and decision-making", as well as an Arab seminar in November 1996, in association with the British Council, on the theme of "The role of university women in energizing public life", and an international seminar in September 1997, in association with the Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO) and the Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency (ACCT), on the theme of "Women's rights".

IX.3. Behavioural activities and the training of intermediaries

257. In connection with the objective of changing behaviour, CREDIF carries out studies, followed by information or training seminars. In this context, two main efforts are worthy of mention: a study on the extent of women's participation in decision-making, conducted in 1994 and presented at a national seminar which was widely publicized in the media, and another study, conducted in 1995, on young people's representations and perceptions of women's rights in Tunisia. This study was followed by a workshop on women and the media, held from 23-26 April 1996 at Tabarka, during which journalists and regional radio producers made radio programmes on the perception of women's rights which were aired on those radio stations.

258. Designed with a view to regular meetings of journalists and communicators from the different media organs, the programme of workshops on women and the media aims to raise awareness among participants of the themes surrounding the issue of women, acquaint them with the relevant indicators on women and encourage them to include women as a component of their work.

259. Established in 1997 with UNESCO support, an international chair of studies on the status of women specifically holds international conferences on the status of women under its auspices. Widely publicized in the media, the conferences held within the framework of this chair add towards CREDIF's status as a special forum of national and international dialogue on the problem issues relating to women and society.

X. Violence within the family

X.1. Study of the cultural and institutional aspects of violence

260. The information below is provided in response to the recommendation made by the Committee concerning the phenomenon of violence against women following its consideration of Tunisia's combined initial and second reports in 1995.

261. Marital violence is most commonly dealt with within the framework of the extended family, which serves the dual function of guaranteeing protection and arbitration. Bearing in mind the primordial interest of children, family members often intercede to reconcile the married couple. In addition, for

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reasons of modesty or concern to maintain their dignity, some women victims of violence prefer to remain silent.

262. Marital violence is, however, far from being a taboo subject. An anti-violence strategy introduced by the public authorities, in association with women's non-governmental organizations, has been in place since the early 1990s.

263. In 1991, a study conducted by UNFT of the main agents concerned (lawyers, doctors, social workers) and a representative sample of 1,000 people nationwide allowed a first-time analysis of the social, cultural and institutional aspects of the phenomenon of marital violence. The study revealed that 51 per cent of the men and 60 per cent of the women surveyed, particularly those who were educated, acknowledged that violence in the family was unacceptable.

264. In particular, the study recommended the reform of article 23 of the Personal Status Code and reform of the Penal Code concerning violence towards a spouse, as well as the establishment of refuge centres for women in distress.

X.2. A multidimensional strategy

265. Taking into account the results of this study, the anti-violence strategy adopted by the public authorities focuses on three areas: legislation, the institutional field and the communication field.

266. At the legislative level, the reforms adopted in 1993 amending certain articles of the Personal Status Code and the Penal Code constituted an adequate response to all these recommendations.

267. Pursuant to the reform of article 23 of the Personal Status Code, the stipulation that a wife had a duty of submission to her husband was erased and replaced by the notion of mutual treatment between spouses. New article 23 provides that: "Each of the spouses shall be considerate of, maintain good relations with and avoid causing injury to the other." Elimination of the requirement of submission is a fundamental notion which represents a break away from the former system of reference based on the treatment of women as inferior and confirms the emergence of the status of women as human beings with proper rights, an abstraction of her marital status.

- Under former article 23 of the Personal Status Code, a husband was, on the one hand, obliged to "treat his wife with consideration and avoid causing her injury" and the wife, on the other hand, was obliged to obey him and "perform her conjugal duties in accordance with custom."

- The reform of this article pursuant to Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 established new relations based on reciprocal treatment. Each spouse is now under mutual obligation to treat the other with consideration and to avoid causing injury to the other.

- A wife is no longer included among the property of her husband, who has a duty of protection. Instead, she has the status of a full legal person with the same rights and duties as her spouse in regard to respect for dignity, affection and proper treatment. Moreover, the

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husband's perception of his wife forms the entire basis of the relationship between the couple, which is thus fundamentally altered.

268. In the same vein, following the reform of 1993, the Penal Code accorded to a wife the imprescriptible right to life as an individual and the right to respect of her physical integrity, a right integral to the human being. The proof of this recognition lay in the repeal of article 207, which granted the benefit of attenuating circumstances to any husband who murdered his wife caught in flagrante delicto of adultery. This crime is now subject to the penalty applicable for manslaughter, namely life imprisonment, if the act proves to have been voluntary. The wife's right to life, an inalienable right inherent to the human being, irrespective of the intentional nature of his or her conduct, is reinstated. Equality of the sexes before the Penal Code concerning crimes of passion is therefore established, thus making a substantial contribution to instilling in the collective consciousness the principle of the individual integrity of women, regardless of their marital status.

269. In close connection with the above, in matters of violence towards a spouse, Act No. 93-72 of 12 July 1993 amending article 218 of the Penal Code treats the marital bond as an aggravating circumstance which warrants a heavier penalty, whereas marital violence was previously subject to the ordinary penalty for assault.

270. Marital violence is now subject to a penalty of imprisonment for a two-year period and a fine of 2,000 dinars, whereas any act of violence or assault is subject only to imprisonment for a one-year period and a fine of 1,000 dinars. New article 218 provides that:

> "Any individual who wilfully commits assault or battery or any other act of violence or assault which is not covered by the provisions of article 319 shall be punished by imprisonment of one year and a fine of one thousand (1,000) dinars. If the perpetrator of the assault is a descendant or spouse of the victim, the penalty shall be imprisonment of two years and a fine of two thousand (2,000) dinars. If there was premeditation, the penalty shall be imprisonment of three years and a fine of three thousand (3,000) dinars."
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> "Withdrawal of the case by a victim who is an ascendant or spouse shall terminate any proceedings, trial or enforcement of penalty. Attempted assault shall be punishable."

271. The Child Protection Code protects children against any form of violence likely to be practised against them. It "guarantees children the right to benefit from various preventive measures in the social, educational and health fields and from other arrangements and procedures aimed at protecting them from any form of violence, harm or physical, mental or sexual assault." (art. 2).

272. Pursuant to article 28 of the Child Protection Code, a body of regional child protection officers has been established at the rate of one or two officers per governorate based on the needs and density of the population. In accordance with article 30, the child protection officer is "responsible

for assuming a task of preventive action in all cases where it is proved that the health of the child or his physical or mental integrity is threatened or endangered owing to the environment in which he lives or to acts which he carries out or as a result of ill-treatment to which he is subjected ...".

273. Pursuant to the Child Protection Code, every person is required by law to report instances of violence to which a child may be subjected in any environment, be it school, home or elsewhere. This duty to inform was introduced under articles 31 and 32.

274. The risks on account of which the family magistrate intervenes are defined in article 20 of the above-mentioned Child Protection Code.

275. The child protection officer is in a position to acknowledge the threat experienced by children within the meaning of article 20. Pursuant to article 35, he has the power to carry out investigations and take appropriate measures on account of the child and produce a report for submission to the family magistrate. In the event of threat, the child protection officer may decide:

- Either to allow the child to remain with the family while taking the necessary measures to eliminate the source of threat;
- Or temporarily to place the child with a foster family or in any other appropriate social institution.

276. The National Report on Children is an opportunity to follow up the measures taken for the benefit of children at risk and to take annual stock of the situation of children in the country.

277. At the institutional level, the public authorities have encouraged both governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations to establish women's advice centres and refuges for women in distress.

278. One of the measures adopted was to open registers in casualty departments and police stations to identify cases of battered women. A circular from the Ministry of Public Health, dated 11 November 1995, called on hospital casualty departments to report to the authorities concerned all cases of violence which they admitted or treated.

279. Since 1992, citizens' relations bureaux have been created in every ministerial department and in every governorate throughout the Republic. The MAFF Bureau is a women's advice unit which intervenes in cases of marital and family dispute and which operates with support from a team of multidisciplinary consultants. The unit systematically endeavours to protect women's rights and has two helplines: 1,308 which consists of a database on women's rights, particularly on matters of personal status and social security cover, and 1,302, which handles complaints and inquiries from female citizens.

280. Some women's non-governmental organizations, in particular UNFT, the Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy (AFTD) and ATM, set up refuges for battered women. UNFT provides a legal advice service for women in distress,

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whereas AFTD, which studies this phenomenon at close hand, takes in battered women and provides them with psychological and legal assistance. In its new base, ATM has very recently set up premises where it can take in mothers who are battered or in distress. As for OTEF, it has formed a body of family mediators who provide help in cases of marital and family dispute by informing those concerned of their respective rights and duties.

281. At the level of social and political communication, a national awareness-raising campaign under the title of "civic responsibility begins at home" was launched in 1995 by the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs in association with ERTT. This campaign made a substantial contribution to promoting dialogue as a way of forming relations based on equality and mutual respect and as a means of managing disputes. Part of the national plan of action for the family, the campaign was based on four television advertisements focusing on dialogue within the family (between couples and between parents and children), the redistribution of domestic tasks and the promotion of a non-violent upbringing. These advertisements, which were heavily screened at peak viewing hours, were backed up by posters and formed the subject of an impact assessment study with a view to more appropriate targeting.

282. Still within the framework of the national plan of action for the family, the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs has undertaken two major studies. The first study, conducted in 1998/99 on socialization within the family, highlighted the growing importance of the value of dialogue as a method of dispute management and of education within the family. The second study on relations within the family, which was scheduled for the year 2000, aims to identify violence in couples and between family members.

283. The phenomenon of violence within the family has been addressed simultaneously on various fronts by the State. The fundamental reforms of the Personal Status Code and the Penal Code are evidence of a clear political will to establish in law the notions of the fundamental right of women and of equality between the sexes, whereas the awareness-raising campaigns aimed at anchoring women's rights within the family illustrate the will to ensure that these rights become part of the family's actual experience. The fact that non-governmental organizations are encouraged to assume responsibility for this aspect of family and marital life is ultimately an expression of the State's will to strengthen the role of civil society in establishing and defending women's rights in particular and human rights in general.

X.3. Some statistical indicators

284. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior, in 1998, the number of women victims of marital violence who instituted legal proceedings against their husband stood at 3,600, representing 0.21 per cent of families, the number of which amounts to 1,704,185 (according to the 1994 census).

285. Figures show that domestic violence is not a social phenomenon in Tunisia, its proportions being no higher than other domestic breaches (offences of abandoning the family, obstructing free exercise of the right of visit and so on). Criminal law and legal practice both come down heavily on these breaches,

although conciliation is the preferred means for settling family disputes at both the criminal level and the civil level, the overall aim being to safeguard the cohesion of the family. In this context, it should be remembered that article 218 of the Penal Code, as amended by Act No. 93-72 of 12 July 1993, clearly provides that in cases of family violence, the withdrawal of a case by a victim who is an ascendant or spouse terminates any proceedings, trial or enforcement of penalty.

286. According to a report produced by AFTD on the basis of examining 118 cases of battered women which it handled in 1998, the violence to which women are subjected is essentially marital violence in 64 per cent of cases and family violence in 14.5 per cent of cases. In addition to the 118 cases which AFTD handled in 1998 (86 new cases and 32 already on file), the report also brings to light two cases of rape, two cases of violence at work, one case of sexual harassment and nine cases of verbal or social abuse (in a public place).

287. The report further indicates that marital and family violence decreases in inverse proportion to educational attainment. Of the 118 cases handled in 1998, 24 were illiterate, 63 had a secondary school education, 13 had a university education and 70 were homemakers.

288. According to the annual report on the situation of children for the year 1998, between the time of entry into force of the Personal Status Code and June 1998, 1,311 cases of children at risk were reported to the competent authorities, among them 590 girls. Child protection officers intervened in 1,290 cases.

Prospects

289. The plan of action developed by the Commission on Women and the Media is already in the implementation stage. Three of the measures included in the plan have already been carried out:

- In July 1998, a workshop was held which brought the decision-makers and professionals employed in a variety of occupations at ERTT together with the members of the Commission. Following its recommendations, a directive on equality in audio-visual communications was addressed to ERTT, as well as a mailing list of women with creative talents and resource persons in all fields.

- The Tahar Haddad prize was introduced as an award for the most balanced image of women in the media.

- In July 1999, a workshop was organized for the producers and scriptwriters employed by ERTT.

290. The implementation of this plan of action for women and the media, the pursuit of the media campaign "civic responsibility begins at home", the project to create a television programme for the family in order to strengthen its skills in providing socialization in human rights values, the creation of the Tahar Haddad Prize and the role of CREDIF are all measures which combine to

offer fresh prospects in the fight to eliminate sexual stereotypes in social, media and cultural communications.

291. Although behavioural activities are inevitably a long drawn-out and continuous process, the political will to eradicate the consequences of discrimination and the synergy created by all the agents concerned, whose roles are complementary, undoubtedly help to shrink prejudices and reduce the incidence of customary practices.

Article 6: Prostitution

> "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women."

292. The legislative and administrative policy aims to limit as much as possible the areas reserved for this type of activity, while ensuring medical supervision and rigorous health checks for authorized prostitutes. At the same time, appropriate legislative and other measures are applied to punish severely any form of clandestine prostitution (arts. 231-235 of the Penal Code).

293. Prostitution is truly declining as the female emancipation policy develops. In the last few years, several establishments have closed, particularly in Sfax, Gafsa and Mahdia. In 1998, the number of authorized prostitutes amounted to 422 in a total of 15 establishments.

294. The Ministry of Public Health subjects the authorized brothels to extremely strict medical and health controls by means of regular clinical and biological health checks and follow-ups in order to protect the health of prostitutes and that of their clientele. Every brothel is supervised by an approved doctor and each prostitute has a health record.

295. In addition, within the framework of its IEC strategy, the national programme to combat acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) has ensured the development, production and distribution of educational aids aimed at promoting the use of condoms among authorized prostitutes and at raising awareness of the risk of AIDS infection.

296. In view of the tolerance of Tunisian society, authorized prostitution can be reduced only gradually with the strengthening of sociological balances and relationships between men and women based on equality and reciprocity, particularly among young people in rural and urban areas alike.

297. However, since Tunisia is an open country with heavy tourism (over 4 million tourist visitors annually), the phenomenon of clandestine prostitution is difficult to control. Bearing in mind this situation, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Interior target the efforts to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS at this section of the population in order to limit the risks of infection.

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298. Within the framework of this IEC strategy, the Alliance of Women in the Medical and Social Professions, which comes under UNFT, has, in association with the National Office of Family Planning and Population (ONFP), directed its awareness-raising activities at young women engaged in clandestine prostitution.

Article 7: Political and public life

> "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:
>
> "(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
>
> "(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
>
> "(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country."

I. Legislative and institutional mechanisms

299. In the quest to establish real equality as a fact, the Tunisian legislator has adopted the approach of progressively introducing an egalitarian view of human relations into law in order to give the situation time to adapt and evolve. Since the 1960s, the legislation has undeniably integrated women's political and civil rights on an equal footing with men. With a view to more effectively combating any attempt to appropriate these rights in practice, however, it has proved necessary for the legislation to integrate on a gradual basis the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination. Since 1959, articles 6 and 8 of the Constitution have guaranteed "the same rights and duties" to all citizens, while articles 20 and 21 have guaranteed the right of both men and women to vote and to be elected.

300. In accordance with the amendments introduced pursuant to Constitutional Act No. 97-65 of 27 October 1997, the Constitution strengthened the principle of the equality of citizens by explicitly enshrining the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination between the sexes.

* New article 8 of the Constitution concerning the organization of political parties in particular introduced respect for human rights and the principles relating to personal status as preconditions for the organization of a political party by specifying the requirement for "parties to undertake to proscribe all forms of discrimination". The principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination is thus a constitutional principle. The article also provides that:

"Political parties shall respect the sovereignty of the people, the values of the Republic, human rights and the principles relating to personal status.

"Political parties shall undertake to ban all forms of violence, fanaticism and racism, as well as all forms of discrimination.

"A political party may not fundamentally base its principles, objectives, activities or programmes on any religion, language, race or sex."

* Article 76 of the Penal Code determining the conditions to be fulfilled for a candidate to stand for election places descent through the mother on an equal footing with descent through the father by stipulating that "any voter born of a Tunisian father or a Tunisian mother and having attained 23 years of age shall be eligible for the Chamber of Deputies".

301. Tunisia ratified the International Covenant on the Political Rights of Women by virtue of Act No. 67-41 of 21 November 1967.

302. Tunisian legislation has strived to achieve a balance between recognition of the equal rights of both sexes and the establishment of a system of protection for women by granting them specific rights as women and mothers. Over the past five years, women have been granted a number of fresh advantages:

- Periods of time set aside for breastfeeding have been reinstated;
- The cost of childcare is assumed by the National Social Security Fund;
- Private investment with a view to setting up childcare facilities is encouraged;
- In the private and public sectors, family allowances are automatically awarded to mothers who have custody of their children and the age of those entitled to receive such allowances has been extended to 21 in both sectors (cf. paras. 596-598).

303. The Minister for Women and Family Affairs, CREDIF, the National Women and Development Commission, which was created in 1991 in the context of preparing the Eighth National Development Plan (1992-1996) and relaunched as part of the Ninth Plan, and the CNFF equal opportunities committee are all specific structures which enable women to become more closely involved in the policy-defining process.

304. The establishment within RCD, the majority party in power, of a permanent secretariat for women's affairs and of other specific local and regional institutions has had an extremely positive impact on women's participation in political life.

II. Women in the elected bodies

305. The number of women in the Chamber of Deputies has progressed at a moderate pace, having increased from 1.12 per cent in 1957 to 4.26 per cent in 1989, 7 per cent in 1994 and 11.5 per cent in 1999.

306. Following the legislative elections in October 1999, the Chamber of Deputies now comprises 21 women out of a total number of 182 deputies. Women voters accounted for 1,570,131 of the total number of registered voters, which stood at 3,387,542.

Chamber of Deputies in 1999

Division of seats by political party membership and sex

Political party membership	Number of deputies	
	Men	Women
Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD)	128	20
Mouvement du Renouveau "Ettajdid"	5	-
Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes (MDS)	13	-
Parti de l'Union Populaire (PUP)	7	-
Union Démocratique Unioniste (UDU)	6	1
Parti Social Libéral (PSL)	2	-
Total	161	21
Overall total	182	

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

307. For over a decade, a woman deputy has been vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies and a woman is also currently president of the Parliamentary Commission on Amenities.

308. In the local councils, the proportion of women increased from 1.29 per cent in 1957 to 13.6 per cent in 1990 and 16.55 per cent with the elections in 1995.

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Number of local councillors 1985-2000

	Local councillors		
Term	Number of women	Total	Per cent
1985-1990	464	3 548	14
1990-1995	521	3 920	13.5
1995-2000	677	4 090	16.55

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

309. In the present term, there are 110 women vice-chairpersons of town councils, including five who are first advisors to the chairperson. Of the 257 town councils in the country, 254 have women councillors. The office of chairperson of a town council was assumed by a woman for the first time ever in 1980.

III. Women in the higher consultative bodies

310. With a view to ensuring the participation of women in regional politics and improving their integration into the policy-defining process at the regional and local levels, the members of the regional development councils (CRD) include at least two women.

311. Most higher councils, such as the Higher Planning Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Councils for Health, Education, Communications, Children, Women and the Family, and Environment include women, although still in only limited proportions.

312. In 1991, in order to compensate for the poor representation of women on the sectoral committees involved in preparing the Eighth National Development Plan (1992-1996), President Ben Ali decided that one of the 13 committees concerned should be assigned the specific task of defining a strategy for women in the five-year development plan. This committee, which introduced gender policy into matters of national planning, also formulated the strategy for women in the Ninth Plan (1997-2001). It meets annually in order to follow up implementation of the plan and comprises national experts representing ministerial departments and various institutions responsible for programmes which are geared towards women, as well as organizations and associations active in women's affairs.

313. In 1998, a woman was appointed to the office of administrative ombudsman.

IV. Women in the judicial bodies

314. In 1998, the Higher Magistracy Council comprised 28 members, including two women magistrates.

315. Since the appointment of the first woman magistrate in 1968, the number of women in the various institutions of Tunisian justice has constantly grown, in particular during the 1990s, when a qualitative change took place as women made inroads into the justice administration.

316. In 1984, there were only 77 women out of 733 magistrates, or in other words, 10.5 per cent. This percentage doubled over a 10-year period; in 1995, there were 258 women out of a total of 1,105 magistrates, or in other words, 23.3 per cent, which rose to 24 per cent in 1998.

* In 1997, there were 290 women out of a total of 1,282 magistrates, or in other words, 22.6 per cent, broken down as follows:

- 265 out of 1,150 ordinary law magistrates, which is 23.4 per cent;
- 15 out of 82 magistrates of the Court of Audit, which is 18.29 per cent;
- 10 out of 50 magistrates of the Administrative Court, which is 20 per cent.

* In 1998, the number of women magistrates stood at 24 per cent.

Number of women magistrates 1992-1999

	Women	Men	Total	Percentage of women
1992	231	786	1 017	22.71
1997	265	885	1 150	23.04
1998	291	921	1 212	24.00
1999	310	993	1 303	23.07

Source: Ministry of Justice.

317. The family magistrate and the children's magistrate are judicial offices created in 1993 and 1996 respectively with a view to more effectively instilling greater respect for women's rights, the rights of the child and the rights of all family members in general.

318. Women magistrates have also been appointed to the following offices: presiding judge of a court division since 1989, chief justice of the Tunis Court of Appeal in 1994, director-general of the Centre for Legal Studies since 1995 and, more recently, director of civil affairs and director of criminal affairs in the Ministry of Justice.

319. At the present time, there is one woman presiding judge of a court division. In addition, there are 16 women judges in the Court of Cassation,

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seven women presiding judges of divisions of the Court of Appeal and 40 women appeal judges. In the courts of first instance, two women are presiding judges and 19 are deputy presiding judges. In March 2000, for the first time ever, a woman magistrate was promoted to the office of chief justice of an appeal court.

320. In 1998, for the first time ever, a woman was appointed as chief justice of the Court of Audit.

321. The most recent statistics indicate that the proportion of women lawyers increased from 10 per cent in 1992 to 12 per cent in 1997 and 21.60 per cent in 1998.

322. In 1998, out of the total number of 75 candidates who sat the competitive examination for entrance to the Higher Magistracy Institute, 14 women candidates gained admission.

V. Women in the political bodies

V.1. The executive power

323. Since 1983, two women have held ministerial office, namely as Minister of Public Health and Minister for Women and Family Affairs.

324. The Government currently includes two women ministers. The first has held office since 1995 as minister of state to the first minister with responsibility for women and family affairs (in 1992, this office was held by a secretary of State) and the second was appointed in April 1999 as Minister of Environment and Regional Development.

325. A women has held the post of advisor to the President of the Republic.

V.2. Political parties

326. The Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD), the majority party in power, has distinguished itself by adopting an avant-garde policy on women. At the instigation of its leader, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, RCD has made a true leap forward by implementing a voluntarist policy and working, within the framework of a well-targeted strategy, to mobilize women and ensure that they become active partners in the achievement of its political objectives.

327. The widening of the political debate to include the women elite assumed a new national dimension following the creation of a permanent secretariat for women's affairs within RCD. Ranking second in line in the party hierarchy after the general secretariat, the permanent secretariat for women's affairs has overall responsibility for over 1,500 women's units. Moreover, in each regional coordination committee, a woman holds the post of assistant secretary-general with responsibility for women's affairs.

328. Women now make up a considerable electoral force: in the legislative and presidential elections held in 1994, their participation reached record figures in some regions.

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329. In the political bureaux of the six opposition parties, there are four women: one in Ettajdid and three in the Rassemblement Socialist Progressiste.

330. In comparison with the other political parties, RCD is thus a frontrunner in regard to the mobilization of women at both the elite and grass-roots levels. The drive and energy of RCD make a substantial contribution, particularly in the country's inland areas, towards instilling new traditions and conveying a new image of women based on the values of respect for women's rights, in particular their right to citizenship and participation.

331. Within a 10-year period, the number of women has grown almost tenfold in the basic organs of RCD, increasing in the basic cells from 2 per cent in 1988 to 16.21 per cent in 1997 and in the federations from 2.8 per cent in 1988 to 20 per cent in 1998.

332. As for the leadership ranks, there has been an obvious breakthrough in the central committee, where the number of women increased from 3.11 per cent throughout the 1970s and 1980s to 21.2 per cent in 1998, although a woman has sat on the political bureau since 1991 (1/10).

RCD: percentage increase in female representation

	1988	1994	1998
Central committee	3.11	11	21.20
Federations	2.8	-	20.00
Basic cells	2	6	16.21

Source: RCD.

333. "Women and the family" was one of the seven motions constituting the platform of the RCD congress. The resolutions declared in this motion were specifically aimed at developing women's capabilities, integrating them more satisfactorily into social and economic development and giving impetus to their presence in political bodies, in particular those of RCD.

VI. Women in the trade union bodies

334. Article 8 of the Tunisian Constitution recognizes the right of women to join trade unions along with men, without discrimination. The Labour Code also recognizes that right. In the trade unions, the participation of women is significant at the grass-roots level. As illustrated by the following table, the proportion of women in UGTT is higher on the basis of the number of women in a given sector:

Percentage of unionized women by sector in 1998

Sector	Percentage of unionized women
Textile/weaving/clothing industry	55
Education	23
Agriculture	3.5
Post and telecommunications	12

Source: UGTT.

335. In order to encourage the integration of women into positions of decision-making in the unions, a National Committee for Working Women, consisting of co-opted members, was established in 1992 and takes part in developing UGTT activity programmes.

336. In 1997, a woman was appointed to the executive bureau of UGTT to assist in drafting the motions for the nineteenth congress of the central trade union organization, which took place in April 1999.

337. At the time of the nineteenth congress of the central trade union organization, there were three women candidates for the executive bureau, representing the sectors of post and telecommunications, education and health.

VII. Women in the activity sectors

338. Women account for over one quarter of civil servants, their numbers amounting to over 98,000 of the total of 350,000 (or, in other words, 28 per cent). Most of them are in the 20-45 age group. The breakdown is as follows: 25 per cent are executives; 31.9 per cent are supervisors; and 42.5 per cent are operational staff.

Women in the civil service 1977-1999

Year	Number of women	Overall number	Percentage of women
1977	15 263	106 325	14.4
1984	51 433	512 772	23.7
1994	97 025	259 913	37.3
1999	109 575	294 418	37.2

Source: Secretariat of State for the Civil Service.

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339. At the sectoral level, the extent to which some departments are now opening up to women executives is encouraging. This is particularly true in the case of the Ministries of Education (44.5 per cent), Public Health (48 per cent) and Environment and Regional Development (36 per cent). Generally speaking, women are progressively establishing themselves in the other departments in an ongoing process.

VII.1. The banking sector

340. In the banking sector, women have made a remarkable breakthrough at all levels and on every scale, achieving a proportion of 34.44 per cent in 1998. Women account for 22.85 per cent of the managerial staff, 35.4 per cent of the support staff, 42.62 per cent of the operational staff and 20.32 per cent of attendants and service staff.

VII.2. The health sector

341. It is already several years since women first began to hold senior administrative positions in the public health sector. This sector employs an extremely high proportion of women (25,659 men compared with 23,636 women, representing 48 per cent, in 1997).

342. In 1984, the total number of 2,967 medical doctors included only 632 women, or 21.5 per cent. The number of women doctors has since grown appreciably; in 1997, they accounted for 2,260 of the total number of 5,967 doctors, which amounts to 37.9 per cent. The proportion of female nurses also increased from 37.1 per cent (2,906 out of a total of 7,082) to 47.61 per cent (7,102 out of a total of 14,917) in 1997.

343. Large numbers of women are now employed in various specialist fields, such as dental surgery and pharmacy, where in the public health sector in 1997, they represented 61.6 per cent and 70 per cent respectively.

VII.3. The education sector

344. In education, the number of women increased from 29.4 per cent in 1984 to 33 per cent in 1989 and 44.5 per cent in 1994.

345. The percentage of women teaching in the first cycle of basic education has gradually increased to the point where it is on a virtual par with that of men, standing at 47.9 per cent of teachers in 1995/96 and 49.2 per cent in 1998/99.

346. In secondary education, the percentage of women teachers similarly increased from 39.5 per cent in 1992/93 to 42.9 per cent in 1996/97. The number of qualified women schoolteachers increased from 11 for every 15 men in 1994/95 to 16 for every 22 men in 1996/97.

347. The proportion of women university lecturers increased from 15.5 per cent in 1986 to 24 per cent in 1993/94 and 29.1 per cent in 1999.

Number of women university lecturers 1986-1998

	1986/87	1993/94	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Total lecturers	3 650	5 360	6 641	7 263	8 261
Women	564	1 284	1 766	2 037	2 400
Percentage of women	15.5	24	26.6	28	29.1

Source: Ministry of Higher Education.

VIII. Women's access to decision-making positions

348. A comparison of the situation of women in the civil service in 1992 with that in 1998 shows the progression which has clearly taken place. The proportion of women executives in functional posts increased from 5 per cent in 1984 to 12 per cent in 1992 and 14 per cent in 1998.

349. In 1984, there were no women among the 63 directors-general and only 13 women directors out of a total of 373, or in other words, 3.5 per cent. In 1998, there were 17 women directors-general out of a total of 324, or, in other words, 5.24 per cent. There are now 97 women directors out of a total of 976, or, in other words, 9.93 per cent.

Increase in the percentage of women in functional posts

	1984		1994		1998	
Functional post	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Secretary-General	45	0	47	0	19	0
Director-General	63	0	222	9	324	17
Director	360	13	676	37	976	97
Deputy Director	576	16	998	116	1 532	231
Head of department	1 260	106	1 894	362	3 147	633
Subtotal	2 304	135	3 837	524	5 998	978
Overall total	2 439		4 361		6 976	
Percentage	94.5	5.5	87.98	12.01	85.98	14.01

Source: Secretariat of State for the Civil Service.

VIII.1. In ministerial departments and the economy

350. In 1998, 63 of the 234 functional posts in the Office of the Prime Minister were held by women, which is 26.9 per cent. The General Department of Administration and Civil Service alone has seven female directors as opposed to four male directors.

351. As for foreign affairs, although only 22 of the overall number of 278 functional posts are held by women, representing 7.9 per cent, the department has appointed at least eight women ambassadors over the past 10 years or so. At the present time, there are two women ambassadors who represent Tunisia, one of them in Oslo and the other in Lisbon.

352. Nine women hold the position of president or director-general in the following public enterprises:

- The Maritime Tourist Company "NAVITOUR";
- The Telecommunications Studies and Research Institute;
- The Trading Company for Handmade Products "SOCOPA";
- The Centre for Legal Studies;
- The Institute of Economic Sciences and Trade;
- The Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF);
- The International Centre of Environmental Technology;
- The National Family and Population Office (ONFP);
- The Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI).

353. As for women's access to positions of responsibility, some departments achieve proportions of 24 per cent, 26 per cent and even 29 and 30 per cent (respectively the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of International Cooperation and External Investment, and the Ministry of Economic Development).

354. In the civil service, efforts have been made to give women more opportunities to benefit from permanent training courses by instituting, in 1993, a system of permanent distance training. Between 1997 and 1998, out of a total of 2,083 women, 843 participated in the training sessions held by the National Administration School (ENA), representing 40 per cent of all those who benefited.

IX. The emergence of female entrepreneurship

355. In the sector of industrial development and in the other economic sectors, women "entrepreneurs" have come onto the scene in recent years. Of these, 1,500 are members of the National Council of Women Heads of Enterprises (CNFCE), which is attached to UTICA.

356. At the time of the national census of 1994, there were 4,850 women heads of projects. Divided by sector, 85 per cent of them were in industry and handicrafts, 8 per cent in trade and 7 per cent in services. According to the estimates of CNFCE, women heads of enterprise account for 8.5 per cent of all entrepreneurs, employing approximately 100,000 people.

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357. In 1999, three women had seats on the executive bureau of UTICA; one had been an "observer" member since 1992 and the two others had been elected members since 1997.

358. CNFCE has a number of regional branches, particularly in the large industrial centres such as Sfax, Sousse and Gabès.

359. Women heads of enterprise have an active presence within the framework of chambers of commerce. The Tunisian-Netherlands Chamber of Commerce is presided over by a woman and several women also preside over regional chambers of commerce and industry.

360. The economic potential of women heads of enterprise is also evident at Expofémina, an annual fair organized by CNFCE. Held for the third time in 1998 with the participation of various women heads of enterprise from Europe, Africa and the Arab world, the fair is now well on the way to establishment as one of the country's major economic events.

361. The success of women heads of enterprise and of CNFCE was equally demonstrated by the election of the woman chairperson of CNFCE as chairperson of the International Committee of Women Heads of Enterprise in 1998.

362. A similar grouping of women is found in UTAP (Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries) and FNA (National Women Cultivators Federation), which has regional and local sections and comprises women farmers.

X. Social and educational care facilities

363. A survey of 181 women ministerial executives on the issues concerning women and a career in the public administration, conducted in 1998 in association with the National Public Administration School (ENAP) of the University of Quebec, the National Administration School of the University of Tunis and CREDIF, concluded that 90 per cent experienced no conflict between their family responsibilities and their careers. In practice, however, it is still difficult to verify whether any balance is achieved in reconciling the time spent at work and with the family (fatigue, stress and so on).

364. With a view to improving the conditions in which women perform their professional, social and family activities, particular energy has been devoted to expanding childcare facilities, enhancing the educational programmes offered by such facilities and training their supervisory staff on the basis of a strategy pursued within the framework of the National Plan of Action for the Follow-up, Protection and Development of Children (1992-2001).

365. As part of this strategy, Act No. 94-88 of 26 July 1994 determined the methods by which the National Social Security Fund could help to finance day-care centres by contributing towards the cost of caring for children whose mothers work outside the home.

366. Within the context of this strategy, a framework agreement was also signed between the supervising department (Ministry of Youth and Children) and three

national children's organizations in order to help them create new institutions, particularly in regional areas and in highly populated working-class districts.

367. As a result of these measures, the number of children's nurseries clearly increased from 692 catering for 45,200 children in 1991 to 1,200 catering for 72,316 children in 1997.

368. The number of children's clubs increased from 244 catering for 37,827 children and employing 678 workers in 1995 to 258 catering for 38,035 children and employing 749 workers in 1997.

369. At the present time, there are 77 day-care centres catering for 1,224 children, 314 of whom are aged between two months and one year. These facilities are nevertheless concentrated in urban areas.

370. In both urban and rural areas alike, however, the solidarity within families, with particular reference to grandparents and neighbours, is a factor which continuously helps to reconcile the time spent as a parent with the time spent at work.

XI. Women's participation in public life

XI.1. Expansion of women's organizations

371. Until the end of the 1980s, the only organization in Tunisia where women were able to meet, express themselves and strive for their advancement was the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT), which took shape in the aftermath of the struggle for national independence and the endeavour to build national sovereignty.

372. Since the mid-1980s, the need to find expression in a variety of forums was demonstrated with the emergence, outside UNFT, of women's circles, either as part of the Tahar Haddad Cultural Club, which is run by a woman, or as part of an ad hoc committee within the General Tunisian Labour Union (UGTT).

373. An identical phenomenon was simultaneously observed within UNFT, where the widening of the debate led to the creation of new social and vocational organizations with considerable capacities for support and mobilization: ten or so leagues were gradually established for women in the medical profession, women teachers, women jurists, women pursuing administrative careers, women communicators, women bankers and so on.

374. It was not until after the change of 7 November 1987, however, that new women's organizations successfully emerged, including the Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM), the Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy (AFTD), the Women's "Tunisia 21" Association and Women's Action for Sustainable Development (AFDD).

375. In this context, several organizations active in women's affairs also emerged, thus infusing women's organizations and the public life of women with an unprecedented energy and introducing a new order into the landscape of civil life in the country.

376. Over 20 social, economic, cultural and research organizations working in the field of women's affairs have been established since 1989, six of them since 1994.

377. Owing to their drive and energy, women's organizations are now a vital component of civil society and public life.

378. These organizations have also established themselves as agents in the promotion of sustainable development. Most of them therefore play a part in working to achieve the objectives of the national strategy to combat poverty within the framework of an active partnership.

XI.2. Organizations established prior to 1987

* The National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT)

379. Established nationwide and with a popular base of over 100,000 members, UNFT, which was part of the struggle for national liberation, is undoubtedly one of the institutions which has made the greatest contribution to establishing the social model promoted by the Personal Status Code and which still continues to do so. By means of its training centres and its national and local facilities, it now plays a part in the vocational training mechanism and in the social and economic integration of women. Through the forum known as "13 August", which was established in 1997, it helps to market handicrafts produced by women. It also strives to develop research on women and strengthen the practice of sport among young girls by organizing sports competitions and promoting women's fundamental rights by means of a legal advice service for women. Assisted by its regional delegations in the country's 23 governorates and its sections abroad, UNFT is a true force for the mobilization of women. In 1998, it acquired consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

* The Women's Sports Association (ASF)

380. Since the 1980s, the Women's Sports Association has endeavoured to promote women's sport by encouraging girls to invest some effort in sport at school and outside school.

XI.3. Organizations created after 1987

* The Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM)

381. The Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM) specializes in particular in providing social assistance by means of multidisciplinary mobile teams, raising mothers' awareness of their rights, conducting research on the social condition of family helpers and young mothers and offering support to emigrant Tunisian families. ATM is extremely active and is well established both nation-wide and abroad, where it works with emigrant families. ATM actively participates in the community-led drive at the regional and local levels. In 1997, it acquired consultative status with ECOSOC.

- The Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy (AFTD)

382. The Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy (AFTD) is more concerned with issues of political debate and culture. In addition to organizing seminars and meetings on current political themes, AFTD specifically endeavours to promote the fundamental rights of women by providing care, as well as legal and psychological assistance, for women victims of violence.

- The National Council of Women Heads of Enterprise (CNFCE)

383. The National Council of Women Heads of Enterprise (CNFCE) endeavours to develop the economic potential of women. In addition to the annual fair known as Expofémina, CNFCE organizes regular seminars and meetings for its members. Its woman chairperson has been elected chairperson of the International Committee of Women Heads of Enterprise.

- The Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development (AFTURD)

384. Created in 1989, AFTURD derived from a section of the African Women's Association for Research and Development based in Dakar and brings together as a group university women from different disciplines. Its aim is to conduct studies on the integration of women into the development process in order to ensure their effective participation in decision-making in matters of economic and social development.

XI.4. Organizations created after 1992

- The Women's "Tunisia 21" Association

385. The Women's "Tunisia 21" Association has opted to strive for the full participation of Tunisian women in the discussion of modern-day issues and the social, economic, educational and cultural challenges raised by the new international economic order and the availability of information to society. In 1999, the Women's "Tunisia 21" Association acquired consultative status with ECOSOC.

- Women's Action for Sustainable Development (AFDD)

386. Created in 1995, Women's Action for Sustainable Development works to promote the environment and improve the management of natural resources. It also endeavours to combat poverty and preserve natural resources by supporting the productive activities of rural women.

- Women for Sustainable Development

387. Created in 1993, Women for Sustainable Development is particularly engaged in working to create a human web of associations and to disseminate and publicize the practice of sustainable development and its economic, social and cultural components.

- The ENDA Inter-Arab Association

388. The ENDA Inter-Arab Association was certificated in 1999. It works within the framework of an integrated approach to sustainable development, mainly to promote women heads of family in the urban fringe districts of Hay Ettadhamen in north-west Tunis by granting microcredit and lending support to microprojects and schemes for literacy, health education and cultural entertainment.

- Women and Science

389. Created in 1999, Women and Science is geared to women working in the science professions. It plays a part in encouraging scientific research skills and strengthening women in the scientific fields.

XI.5. Women in the web of associations

390. The enthusiasm for creating associations is also apparent in the national organizations and vocational training facilities where women's sections have been formed, such as:

- CNFCE within UTICA;
- The National Committee for Working Women within UGTT;
- The National Women Cultivators Federation (FNA) within UTAP;
- The Women's Section of the Tunisian Lawyers' Association.

391. A similar enthusiasm has been equally apparent in humanitarian and human rights organizations, with the creation of women's sections in the Tunisian Human Rights League and the Ladies' Committee of the Tunisian Red Crescent.

392. In addition to these associations working in the economic, political and humanitarian and development fields, a number of cultural associations are in the process of establishing themselves as forums for the discussion of ideas and the development of communication activities and artistic creativity. These include:

- The Tahar Haddad Club (Tunis);
- The Sophonisbe Club (Tunis);
- The Majida Boulila Club (Sfax);
- The Akalil Cultural Association for Creativity and Production (Tunis);
- The Girl Alumni Association of the Rue du Pacha Lycée (Tunis);
- The Alyssa Club (Nabeul);
- The Faouzia Kallel Club (Nabeul);
- The Alumni Association of the Sousse Lycée for Girls.

393. The drive and energy of Tunisian women's non-governmental organizations are reflected in the awards received by some associations, such as UNFT, which won the UNESCO Literacy Prize in 1994, and ATM, which won the prize awarded on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the International Union of Family Organisations (UIOF) for its work with rural women. UNFT and ATM have established dozens of sections abroad in countries where there is a large

Tunisian community, notably in France, Belgium and Italy, with a view to developing ties with the new generation of emigrants.

394. In addition to their mobilization in associations which are specifically for their benefit, women are now acquiring an increasing presence in associations with an active involvement in a variety of sectors. Over 30 of these associations are chaired by women.

395. In vocational associations, women are still poorly represented in the organs of leadership, with the exception of UTICA and the Tunisian Journalists' Association (AJT), which has twice elected a woman as its head.

XII. Strategy for the development of female skills

396. Within the framework of the objectives set by the Ninth Plan, MAFF is working to develop female capabilities and skills with a view to ensuring that women are better prepared for the major economic and technological changes, which it does by means of discussion, exchange and awareness-raising activities. In particular, at the end of a seminar organized on the occasion of 8 March 1996, it formulated a strategy for raising women to the required standard, the basic aim of which was to safeguard the groups most vulnerable to the potentially negative consequences of globalization by ensuring that women, as economic agents, take advantage of the standard-raising opportunities and programmes introduced by the State for the benefit of human resources, as well as from more effectively coordinated activities, projects and programmes targeted at economically active women.

397. Similarly, since 1996, within the framework of the national policy of promoting human resources and with the support of the Frederich Ebert Foundation, CREDIF has organized career management courses for Tunisian women executives under the title of "Women's information and training for more effective vocational development". In 1998, three courses were organized in Tunis (from 23 to 28 March, from 1 to 6 June and from 19 to 23 October), as well as two in Sousse (from 20 to 25 April) and one in Sfax (from 28 September to 2 October).

398. Since 1997, CREDIF has also organized a series of regular meetings known as "CREDIF circles", at which women executives gather to discuss issues of concern to them.

399. Women executives were able to benefit from a course for "gender and development trainers" at the Development Planning Unit in London as part of a three-year cooperation project (1997-1999) between MAFF, CREDIF and the British Council.

400. In 1998, CREDIF began training women executives in the psychology of work and human resources management as part of a training programme designed in association with the Physiological and Cognitive Ergonomics Laboratory of the Practical College of Higher Studies in Paris.

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XII.1. Partnership with non-governmental organizations

401. Non-governmental organizations played a part in developing a national plan of action for the family in 1996 and the plan of action for rural women in 1998.

402. The executive staff of non-governmental organizations also benefit from training and awareness-raising courses organized by CREDIF for the development of gender-specific indicators and in the field of gender planning.

403. In the context of implementing the national plan of action for the family (PAF), a network of reporting staff was created in 1996, consisting of a government network and an associations' network. The latter comprises a number of associations actively involved in work with families.

404. In accordance with its mandate, the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs annually awards subsidies to encourage women's associations and development organizations which target women, the aim being to assist them in carrying out their activities.

405. Since 1995, the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs has been mobilizing funds within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to enable non-governmental organizations working in the interests of women to finance projects for the advancement of women.

406. MAFF has signed a partnership agreement with UNFT concerning the implementation of projects for rural women aimed at supporting vocational training, safeguarding the heritage of the craft industry and improving living conditions in areas of economic depression.

407. In 1996, the partnership process had moved towards the provision of care for vulnerable social groups. To that end, 20 framework agreements were signed with non-governmental organizations pursuant to which the latter sponsored paediatric services in the capital's hospitals.

408. In 1997, framework development agreements were signed with non-governmental organizations working in the fields of women and development with a view to implementing, within the framework of debt recycling with Sweden, new projects for women with specific needs.

409. In 1998, framework agreements were signed with youth organizations with a view to raising young people's awareness of women's rights.

410. In 1998, partnership agreements were signed with five associations, thus marking the start of activity of the support mechanism for women's productive projects established by the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs in accordance with the strategy for women contained in the Ninth Plan and the priorities set by the department for implementation of the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. These agreements are also intended to strengthen the partnership and complementarity between government development programmes and the initiatives taken by organizations in the interests of generating sources of income.

XII.2. Access to media and cultural forums

411. The participation of women in public life is also marked by their gradual access to media forums and the world of culture and sports.

412. A survey of the cultural practices of Tunisians, conducted in 1989/90 by the Centre of Studies and Documentation for Cultural Development, demonstrated the integration of women into the different types of public leisure activities in development. This trend should accentuate as a result of the enthusiastic encouragement of the public authorities for family leisure activities.

413. The audio-visual media, particularly those targeted at young people, also help to instil the new image of women in so far as most of their presenters and newsreaders (60 per cent) are young women. The main television new programmes are not only presented by women journalists, but their main editing is also carried out by women, a job which, by reputation, carries with it a high level of responsibility. A number of sports programmes are also presented by women journalists, as a result of which the number of women in the public media is quite striking.

414. The Tunisian Journalists' Association (AJT) has twice had a woman as its president.

415. Another indicator which denotes the importance of women in the audio-visual world is the integration of women into every occupation which falls within the field of audio-visual production: engineers, computer scientists, technicians, journalists, producers, scriptwriters, camera operators and so on.

416. In the cultural field, women have progressively provided proof of their initiative and creativity. The now frequent exhibitions of women painters and the support given to craftswomen in the revival taking place in the cultural heritage and traditional arts, as well as the emergence of talented women comedians and cinema directors, are signs which demonstrate the rebirth of a new generation of women who are not content simply to consume culture, but who are making their own mark on today's national culture (cf. para. 833 et seq.).

417. As the number of works created by women increases and as women's participation in public life grows and acquires higher visibility, prizes have been introduced to reward the new female talents. These include the Zoubeida Bechir Prize, awarded by CREDIF since 1995 for the year's best (Arabic and French) literary and scientific works by women. The Didon Prix d'Or has been awarded since 1998 by the company Carthage Tours for the best work created by a woman in any area of culture and social endeavour.

418. Following a recommendation of the committee responsible for monitoring the image of women in the media, which is attached to the National Council for Women and the Family, the Tahar Haddad Prize for the media work reflecting the most balanced image of women was introduced pursuant to the Decree of 17 May 1999.

419. MAFF also helps to strengthen women's access to culture and public life by organizing various cultural events aimed at women:

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- A regional Arab symposium on the subject of "Women, women's rights and modern times", organized by MAFF in 1997, during which questions concerning the role of legislation in the advancement of women and the place of women in culture were discussed at length.

- An international seminar on "The dialogue of cultures through the literary creations of women" (August 1997), organized by MAFF as part of the national programme "Tunis, cultural capital of the region", provided the opportunity for exchanges of views on the problem issues surrounding the creative work of women and its relationship with the problem of the specific and the universal through a comparative reading of Arab and Mediterranean literature.

- The national exhibition held in El Abdellia Palace and entitled "Women through the ages", jointly organized by MAFF and the Ministry of Culture in 1997, had the distinction of showing, for the first time, the place occupied by women in public life during the Punic, Roman and Muslim eras.

- The seminar on women, science and technology organized in 1997 in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, enabled participants to learn more about the place of women in scientific research and higher education. It gave rise to the creation in 1998, at the instigation of MAFF, of the association known as Women and Science.

Prospects

420. The fact that women have distinguished themselves by their skills and their devotion has fostered a change in attitudes.

421. The unprecedented drive witnessed in the creative activity of women in different fields has, in recent years, won recognition from the public authorities and from civil society as a whole.

422. The participation of women in economic development and the different forms of cultural and artistic creativity has noticeably increased in the past few years, bearing in mind the particularly favourable political context.

423. The achievement of the objectives of the Ninth Plan in regard to the promotion of women's human resources, the development of associations and a change in attitudes cannot but open up new prospects for the more effective integration of women into public life and the national drive for culture and community life.

Article 8: Women as international representatives

> "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations."

I. Women in the diplomatic corps

424. The public service regulations in Tunisia contain no discriminatory provisions against women. Women may, on equal terms with men, represent their country at the international level as diplomats and may participate in the work of international organizations as experts within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

425. In 1999, women diplomats accounted for 14.35 per cent of the total diplomatic staff in foreign affairs, compared with 9.1 per cent in 1993.

II. Tunisia and the work of the United Nations

426. Tunisia attaches particular importance to all activities of the United Nations, particularly those relating to the process of affirming women's rights.

427. By virtue of the political choices which it has adopted, Tunisia has played a pioneering role in the development of various approaches laid down by international institutions as the preferred way of guaranteeing sustainable development, whether concerning the priority of human development, the key role of women in promoting development or the introduction of a national policy of gender-based planning and assessment.

428. In these different processes begun by the United Nations, Tunisia has encouraged the wide participation of women, which has led in particular to a substantial increase in the number of Tunisian women experts in international bodies (the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) and in regional non-governmental organizations.

429. A further illustration of Tunisian participation is Tunisia's election, for the first time in 1994, as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women for a three-year term. Tunisia took part in that capacity in the thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions of the Commission.

430. Tunisia played an active part in the work of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, with a delegation of almost 120 members. It also participated in the process of preparing for this Conference by hosting several regional meetings, including:

- The preparatory meeting of the African group of experts for the Fifth Dakar Conference on Women and Development, which was held from 27 to 29 July 1994, shortly after the Thirtieth Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The draft African platform of action to be submitted for adoption to the Dakar regional preparatory conference was formulated at this meeting, which brought together some 30 experts from various African countries, including three ministers (from Uganda, Central African Republic and Mali), as well as approximately 15 experts representing OAU, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, FAO, the African Development Bank (ABD) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

* The Arab-African seminar on "Women and the media: access to expression and decision-making", organized by CREDIF in preparation for the aforementioned international symposium convened by UNESCO in Toronto in November 1994, the recommendations of which were taken into account in formulating the Beijing Platform for Action.

* An Arab seminar on "Women and legislation", organized in January 1995 by UNFT.

* An Arab seminar on "Arab women and employment legislation" (April 1995), jointly by the Arab Labour Organization and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

* A Mediterranean meeting on "Women's employment: new theoretical and methodological approaches", organized by Isis Med-Campus and the University of Tunis I.

* The meeting of the International Committee of Women Heads of Enterprise (May 1995), attended by some 60 women heads of enterprise hailing from five continents, organized by CNFCE.

* The "Forum of Women of the Mediterranean", organized from 2 to 4 June 1995 by CREDIF in association with the Valencia Women's Institute (Spain), the Italian-African Institute of Rome, the Marseille Forum of Women of the Mediterranean and the Greek Centre for Research on the Status of Women in the Mediterranean. Attended by over 100 women heads of enterprise from the countries surrounding the Mediterranean, this meeting culminated in a political declaration which was submitted to the forum of non-governmental organizations in Beijing in 1995.

431. Tunisia also took part in several other African meetings on the methodology of drafting national reports. It additionally took part in the final meetings to harmonize the positions of Arab and African groups, held respectively in Beirut and Addis Ababa in June and July 1995, and in the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women held in New York in August 1995.

432. Owing to the experience which it acquired within the framework of its new policy for the advancement of women, whether in sectoral policies or through the activity of the mechanisms for the advancement of women, Tunisia was able to contribute to designing and developing the mainstreaming policy laid down by the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing concerning the systematic application of the gender approach in the analysis, planning and evaluation of both sectoral strategies and specific policies for women and the family.

Tunisia has participated as a matter of course in all the international and regional meetings organized within post-Beijing framework, in particular those organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ESCWA, the League of Arab States and regional organizations from Africa, the Arab world or the Mediterranean region.

433. Tunisia took part in the thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. At each session, it held the office of vice-chairperson.

434. Tunisia was also represented by women executives at several other international events, including:

- The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994);
- The thirty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March-April 1995);
- The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995);
- The Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, held in November 1994 in Dakar, for which Tunisia was elected as vice-president, as well as chairperson of the group responsible for drafting the African platform of action for women;
- The Arab Regional Preparatory Conference for the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing, held in October 1994 in Amman;
- The Women's International Forum, held in May 1996 in Stockholm, organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Washington.

III. Tunisia's regional role

435. In 1996, Tunisia was elected to chair the African Coordination Committee for the Integration of Women into Development (CRAC) for a three-year term. In 1999, it was re-elected to head this forum, which had by then become the African Committee on Women and Development.

436. In addition, Tunisia was elected to chair the technical committee responsible for preparing the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women (November 1999), the first meeting of which was held in Addis Ababa in January 1999 and the second in Tunis in June 1999.

437. Tunisia hosted the meeting of United Nations experts on women and health, organized at the end of September 1998 in association with the office of the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women within the framework of the United Nations follow-up to Beijing.

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438. Lastly, it should be noted that, since 1994, Tunisia has been the host country for the headquarters of the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

Network-building

439. In 1998, two guides were produced and widely distributed to the non-governmental organizations concerned with a view to furthering their involvement in regional and international networks.

- The Directory of International, Regional and National Institutions and Organizations, which is intended for all those actively involved in policies for women and the family. This Directory provides information on the institutions and processes relating to the advancement of women and the family at the international, regional and national levels. It also contains a survey of all the United Nations bodies engaged in work on women's issues.

- A guide to international and African forums and networks for non-governmental organizations working in the field of women and the family, the aim of which is to provide voluntary workers in such organizations with information on the international forums and networks constituting the institutional mechanism concerning policies on women and the family within the framework of multilateral cooperation and international network-building.

IV. Tunisia's contribution to the promotion of South-South cooperation

440. At the first meeting of the representatives of the 10 founding countries, held in Harare in 1995, Tunisia was elected to chair the administrative council of a new intergovernmental alliance known as "Partners in Population and Development: A South-South Initiative". This is an alliance of countries internationally recognized for their reproductive health programmes and strategies, including family planning. The task of the partners is to assist developing countries in implementing the programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, by establishing cooperation projects and intensifying South-South exchanges.

441. Since that date, Tunisia has actively contributed to the development and promotion of this alliance at the regional and international levels.

442. In addition to seeking funds from the donor countries of the North and from developing countries, since 1996, Tunisia has established two major exchange networks and a cooperation project with the Francophone countries of West Africa, all within the framework of the South-South partnership. To be more precise, it has established a research network in the field of sexually transmitted diseases and infertility with Algeria and Morocco and a network of exchange and cooperation between the countries of North Africa and those of Francophone West Africa concerning the provision of a reproductive health service.

443. At the end of 1996, CREDIF started an international training course on gender, population and development, having been chosen by UNFPA as a centre of excellence, within the framework of South-South cooperation, for gender analysis and research. A total of 90 women executives from 22 countries in Africa and North Africa attended the first two courses.

444. On 27 October 1997, CREDIF established an international chair of studies on the status of women in association with UNESCO, thus providing further evidence of the willingness to serve North-South and South-South cooperation concerning the advancement of women and encourage the transfer of methodologies and know-how relating to women's issues.

V. The increasing presence of Tunisian women experts in international forums

445. Reflecting Tunisia's dynamism in connection with the advancement of women, a number of Tunisian women were elected or appointed to regional or international forums or participated in their work during the 1990s. In that context, three Tunisian women are in office at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

446. Three non-governmental organizations for women and the family have been granted consultative status with ECOSOC: ATM in 1997, OTEF and UNFT in 1998 and "Tunisia 21" in 1999.

447. In New York, Tunisia was recently elected by ECOSOC as a member of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for a second term of four years (1998-2001). During the 1998 session, Tunisia was elected to chair the Committee for a period of two years (1998-1999).

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

448. Tunisia was elected to serve as vice-chairperson of the Commission from 1994 to 1997 (thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions).

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

449. A Tunisian woman has been an expert member of CEDAW since 1990.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

450. In 1997, two Tunisian women were appointed to ECA respectively as director of development and information services and as regional advisor for the promotion of women's human and legal rights.

The ECA Committee on Women and Development

451. Since its establishment in 1996, this Committee has been chaired by a Tunisian woman. The role of the Committee is to define the process for assessing implementation of the African platform of action and organize an

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African conference on women every three years. Another Tunisian woman serves on the Committee as an expert.

The specialized agencies of the United Nations

452. In 1997, CREDIF began a three-year term of membership of the Executive Board of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). A Tunisian woman is also a UNIFEM consultant.

International organizations within the United Nations system

UNESCO

453. A Tunisian woman is a member of the Executive Board of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). A Tunisian woman also serves as the chief advisor on African women to the Director-General of UNESCO.

World Health Organization (WHO)

454. A Tunisian woman is an advisor to WHO on reproductive health.

International non-governmental organizations

The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (CONGO/Switzerland)

455. In view of its consultative status with ECOSOC, ATM is a member of CONGO.

Women's Socialist International (ISF)

Tunisia is a member of ISF, the vice-chairperson of which is a Tunisian woman.

International Council of Women (ICW)

The following four offices are held by Tunisian women:

- Vice-chairperson of the health committee;
- Chairperson of the commission for the implementation of laws and conventions;
- Chairperson of the music committee;
- Chairperson of the youth commission.

World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA)

A Tunisian woman is the vice-chairperson for the Arab region.

International Federation of Women in the Legal Profession (FIFCJ)

The female president of the UNFT Alliance of Women Jurists has been a member of the executive bureau since 1998.

International Union of Family Organizations (IUOF)

Three Tunisian women sit on IUOF in the following positions:

- A member of its steering committee;
- Chairperson of the International Commission on Rural Women;
- Vice-chairperson of the youth commission.

International Federation for the Education of Parents (FIEP)/Canada

A Tunisian woman is a member of the FIEP executive board.

Executive Board of Defence for Children International (DCI)

A Tunisian woman jurist is a member of this executive board.

International Environment Council

A Tunisian women jurist is a regional governor of the Council.

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

A Tunisian woman is a member of the central council and another is a member of the women's regional commission for the Arab world.

International Union of Journalists of the French Language Press (UIJPLF)

A Tunisian woman journalist is a member of this Union.

Forum of Researchers for Human Establishments

A Tunisian woman is a member of the executive bureau of this Forum.

African Association of Women for Research and Development (AFARD)

The woman chairperson of AFTURD is the vice-chairperson of this Association.

African Academy of Sciences (AAS)

A Tunisian woman is a member of the AAS council, representing North Africa.

International Committee of Women Heads of Enterprise

In 1997, the woman chairperson of CNFCE was elected as a representative member of the Committee to ECA and, in June 1998, as chairperson of the International Committee of Women Heads of Enterprise.

Intergovernmental non-governmental organizations

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

456. A Tunisian woman deputy is chairperson of the coordination committee of women members of parliament at IPU.

International Intergovernmental Alliance: Partnership, Population and Development

The woman director-general of the National Family and Population Office was president of this Alliance from 1996 to 1998 and was responsible for the population and development programme of the South-South partnership. Since 1999, she has been the honorary president of this organization.

Regional non-governmental organizations

North Africa

457. Tunisia is a member of the Union of North African Women's Associations (UAMF) through UNFT and Women's Action for Sustainable Development (AFDD).

The Arab World

458. Since 1993, Tunisia has hosted the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), which has always had a Tunisian woman as its director.

- The woman president of the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT) is the vice-president of the General Federation of Arab Women.
- In 1998, a Tunisian woman was elected secretary-general of the Arab Family Organization (OAF), which is based in Tunis.

Africa

459. A Tunisian woman is the vice-chairperson for North Africa of the African Network of Development and Communication for Women (FEMNET).

The Mediterranean

460. A Tunisian woman is vice-chairperson of the Network of Mediterranean Women Journalists (RFJM).

A Tunisian woman is a board member of the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region (AWMR).

A Tunisian woman is a member (Tunisian Mothers' Association) of the World Movement of Mediterranean Mothers (MMM MED).

461. The dynamism of Tunisian women's associations is reflected by the awards which some of them have won, as in the case of UNFT, which won the UNESCO

Literacy Prize in 1994, and ATM, which, in 1997, won the fiftieth anniversary prize of IOUF for its efforts to help rural families.

VI. The advancement of women: a component of bilateral cooperation

462. In the field of the advancement of women and the family, Tunisia has signed a series of bilateral conventions or cooperation programmes with brother and friendly countries, notably Indonesia, Mali, Senegal, Palestine, Mauritania, Canada (Quebec), Norway, Egypt, Morocco, Germany, Sweden and Luxembourg, as well as with the European Union.

463. On 27 May 1997, Tunisia hosted the Council of Europe at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg for a seminar on the theme of "Tunisian women in the face of a radically changing situation in Tunisia and Europe". This day was marked by the tribute paid by the European side to the achievements of Tunisian women and their call for a more active commitment from Europe with a view to building a united Euro-Mediterranean forum and combating the fundamentalism which threatened the fundamental rights of women.

464. The advancement of women and the family was the subject of a cooperation programme between MAFF and the German Cooperation Agency (GTZ) in connection with the implementation of a communication strategy aimed at Tunisian families and at promoting respect for the rights of the individual within the family. The restructuring of the training centres for young rural women was also the subject of a cooperation agreement between GTZ and the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment.

465. A number of projects for rural women have been implemented by non-governmental organizations with the assistance of funding obtained within the framework of the bilateral agreement with Sweden on debt recycling.

466. Tunisia and Sweden have also set in motion a process of cultural exchange by organizing a series of conferences on the feminine question within the framework of the "Euro-Islam" programme and bilateral cooperation between Tunisia and Sweden. The first conference was held in 1998 in Stockholm on the theme of "Men, women and children in the face of social, cultural and political changes". A second meeting was scheduled to take place in Tunis in 1999.

467. When started in 1992, CREDIF, for its part, had the benefit of institutional support owing to the technical and financial support provided by OCSD (Canada), particularly in setting up computerized databanks and formulating communication and action research plans on the status of women. A similar programme signed in 1994 enabled women executives to benefit from periods of training in the methodologies of project design and operation.

468. In 1998, a programme of cooperation focusing on the protection of women's rights and the integration of women into social, economic, cultural and political development was signed with Quebec for the five-year period 1998-2002.

469. Since 1998, CREDIF has benefited from a cooperation project with the International Cooperation and Development Agency (ACDI) consisting of project

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management training for CREDIF staff and funding for two action research projects: one on craftswomen and the other on women entrepreneurs in agriculture.

470. Within the framework of cooperation between Tunisia and Luxembourg, UNFT has benefited from a donation to finance the reorganization of its training centres and the establishment of the 13 August Forum.

Prospects

471. The number of Tunisian women in international forums and gatherings has notably risen in recent years at the level of government institutions and non-governmental organizations. The leadership role which is increasingly assigned to Tunisia undoubtedly helps to equip Tunisian women with the skills needed to ensure their presence in even greater numbers in regional and international forums.

Article 9: Nationality

> "1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.
>
> "2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children."

472. The provisions of the Tunisian Nationality Code ensure full respect for the legal personality of a married woman by not withdrawing her nationality following her marriage to an alien, as well as for that of the man by respecting the wishes of his alien wife as to whether or not she acquires Tunisian nationality.

473. Tunisian law is part of a developing process marked by two important stages:

1. In accordance with the amendments made to the Nationality Code pursuant to the Decree-Law of 26 February 1963, women are granted the right to transmit their nationality to their children in the cases set forth in article 6, which provides that:

"The following are considered Tunisian:

"(a) A child born of a Tunisian father;

> "(b) A child born of a Tunisian mother and of a father who is unknown or without nationality or whose nationality is unknown;
>
> "(c) A child born in Tunisia of a Tunisian mother and an alien father."

Pursuant to these provisions, women have unquestionably acquired rights concerning the transmission of nationality to their children. Unlike the case of fathers, however, these rights remain subject to conditions.

2. The reform introduced by Act No. 93-62 of 23 June 1993 amending certain articles of the Nationality Code supplemented and strengthened this right by stipulating in new article 12 that:

> "A child born abroad of a Tunisian mother and an alien father shall become Tunisian provided that he claims that status by declaration within a year preceding his coming of age. However, before attaining the age of 19, the applicant shall become Tunisian upon joint declaration by his father and mother."

474. New progress has thus been accomplished along the road to equal rights between men and women concerning the transmission of nationality.

475. A Tunisian woman married to an alien may accordingly transmit her nationality to any of her children who are born abroad (and whose father is unknown) if the child himself expresses that desire in a declaration which he is required to make one year before attaining the age of majority (art. 6 of the 1964 reform). Alternatively, she may do so immediately after the child's birth pursuant to a joint declaration made by the father and the mother (art. 12 of the 1993 reform).

476. The strengthening of women's rights in matters of nationality was confirmed by the reform of the Constitution. Adopted pursuant to the Act of 27 October 1997, the amendments introduced placed descent through both the father and mother on an equal footing by recognizing the right of any Tunisian born of a Tunisian father or a Tunisian mother, without discrimination, to stand as a candidate for election.

Article 10: Education

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

"(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

"(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

"(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

"(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

"(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

"(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls who have left school prematurely;

"(g) The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

"(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning."

477. Among Tunisia's concerns, education has always received particular attention, so much so that one quarter of the State budget has regularly been allocated to it.

478. In the past 10 years, the education system has progressed remarkably with respect to school enrolment, infrastructure and training of the managerial staff required for social and economic development.

479. The need to endow the country with a satisfactory education system which is free to all without discrimination remains, more than ever, a fundamental choice for Tunisia.

I. Pre-school education

480. Pre-school education is provided in two types of institutions, namely day-care centres and kindergartens.

I.1. Day-care centres

481. There are currently 77 day-care centres catering for children between the ages of two months and three years and attended by 1,224 children, 314 of whom are between the ages of two months and one year.

482. A number of training courses have been organized at the Higher Institute for Children's Managerial Staff to enable workers in day-care centres to improve their qualifications (theory, technical knowledge and practice).

I.2. Kindergartens

483. In 1997, there were 1,200 kindergartens catering for children from three to six years of age and attended by 72,316 children, compared with 692 kindergartens in 1991 attended by 45,200 children.

Year	1991	1995	1997
Number of kindergartens	692	1 042	1 200
Number of children	45 200	64 490	72 316

Source: Ministry of Youth and Children.

484. This increase in the number of established kindergartens is the outcome of a strategy that forms part of the National Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of the Child (1992-2001), the main objective of which is to increase the number and quality of these institutions.

485. In the context of developing the kindergarten sector, a framework agreement was signed with three national children's organizations with a view to helping them to create new institutions, particularly in rural areas and highly populated working-class districts.

486. The pre-school education sector was introduced into the Investment Incentives Code (1993), which provided benefits to encourage private entrepreneurs to set up kindergartens.

487. A strategy for training teaching staff with no formal qualifications in the field of pre-school education was established following the action research conducted during 1996/97. In most cases, such staff consists of women

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coordinators. The products of this action research (training module on audio-visual and written materials) will be used as extensive training tools during the period 1998-2001.

488. An advanced training programme in organized social and educational activities for young children has been designed in order to further improve the qualifications of supervisory staff in kindergartens.

II. Development of the education system

489. In order to adapt to the country's new realities and keep pace with the development of education worldwide, the Tunisian education system was radically reformed (Act of 29 July 1991). In this context and bearing in mind the universal scientific and technological progress under way, Tunisia has embarked on a process of contemplating the schools of the future and consulting the nation on the subject with a view to exploring the readjustments needed to ensure that schools in the twenty-first century provide their leavers with an education which enables them to integrate into a radically changing world characterized by the wealth of discoveries and the speed of the changes under way.

490. The Tunisian school system comprises two levels of education:

- Basic education;
- Secondary education.

491. As a cornerstone of the overall reform in the educational and training system, basic education (6-16 years) aims to provide the basic level of education which is crucial to any subsequent training, whether general, technical or vocational, and which facilitates integration into the economically active world. It also aims to curb the phenomenon of early drop-out from school.

492. Basic education comprises nine years of learning and was first started in 1989. It is free and compulsory for all children, without discrimination, between the ages of 6 and 16 years. The period of this education is divided into two complementary cycles.

493. Lasting six years, the first cycle of basic education provides a general education which takes into account the different aspects of a child's personality. It aims to establish a link between thinking and doing, which are the two fundamental parameters of human activity. This cycle of education is therefore used to endow children with basic knowledge, develop their faculties and build their minds by giving them an education that is consistent with the national culture and offers an introduction to manual and technical skills.

494. Lasting three years, the second cycle of basic education aims to reinforce the knowledge acquired by pupils in the first cycle and ensure through the different subjects taught that they receive an all-round education which strengthens their intellectual capacities and develops their practical skills so

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that they may pursue their education further or integrate successfully into the world of work as responsible citizens.

495. Since 1997/98, access to secondary education has been achieved by means of a national examination taken by pupils in the ninth year of basic education. Since 1998/99, secondary education has comprised four years of study, consisting of a common period of two years, at the end of which pupils admitted into the sixth year move on to a second two-year cycle divided into five sections: humanities, experimental sciences, mathematics, technology and economics and management. This cycle of education ends with the baccalaureate.

496. This new system was introduced at the beginning of the new 1991/92 school year. The selection of options which, in the former system, took place at the end of the third year, is deferred until the fifth year, which, under the new system, is now the second year of secondary education.

497. The aim of secondary education is to prepare young people for specialization, develop their skills, cultivate their abilities and strengthen their capacities so that they are attuned to a world in which knowledge is constantly evolving and also have an interest in the pursuit of scholarship, self-education and creativity.

498. Secondary education is free. Moreover, some pupils are eligible for government grants which allow them the benefit of free room and board. In 1997/98, of the 69,836 grant students, 31,777 were girls, which amounts to 45.5 per cent (including 29.5 per cent for the four rural areas of Jendouba, Kairouan, Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid).

499. In 1996/97, the number of secondary school establishments amounted to 829, representing an increase of 204 institutions in comparison with 1992/93. Six of these establishments are experimental lycées established in Ariana, Kef, Gafsa, Sousse and Tunis. In 1996/97, a total of 89 establishments offering technical qualifications had been created since 1992.

II.1. Statistical indicators

II.1.1. Progress in the school enrolment of girls

(a) School enrolment

500. The indicators relating to the progress of school enrolment at all levels of education show that the gaps between girls and boys are progressively and quickly closing to achieve a gender balance.

501. Between the school years 1992/93 and 1997/98, the primary school enrolment of girls progressed at a much faster rate than that of boys, thus gradually narrowing the discrepancies between the two sexes.

Progress in the enrolment of pupils in the first cycle of basic education

School year	Enrolment of pupils			Progress index			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	% Girls
1992/93	768 031	664 081	1 432 112	100	100	100	46.4
1993/94	783 600	683 811	1 467 411	102	103	102.5	46.6
1994/95	782 923	689 921	1 472 844	101.9	103.9	102.8	46.8
1995/96	772 503	687 598	1 460 101	100.5	103.5	102	47.1
1996/97	759 930	681 213	1 441 143	98.9	102.6	100.6	47.3
1997/98	759 084	681 395	1 440 479	98.8	102.6	100.6	47.3
1998/99	754 076	678 820	1 432 896	98.1	102.2	100.1	47.4

Source: Ministry of Education.

502. The figures in the above table illustrate that the school enrolment of girls clearly progressed between 1992/93 and 1998/99. The progress index is rising among girls and falling among boys, having moved from 100 to 102.2 and 98.1 respectively. During the same period, however, the enrolment of girls progressed by only 1 per cent, from 46.4 per cent to 47.4 per cent, thus confirming that it is beginning to stabilize to within equal limits (in 1995, the ratio of males in the Tunisian population stood at 102.14 per cent).

Progress in the enrolment of pupils in the second cycle of basic education and secondary education

School year	Enrolment of pupils			Progress index			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	% Girls
1992/93	299 499	267 882	567 381	100	100	100	47.2
1993/94	315 927	290 008	605 935	105.5	108.3	106.8	47.9
1994/95	342 167	320 055	662 222	114.2	119.5	116.7	48.3
1995/96	371 869	354 057	725 926	124.2	132.2	127.9	48.8
1996/97	399 333	390 287	789 620	133.3	145.7	139.2	49.4
1997/98	414 963	418 409	833 372	138.6	156.2	146.9	50.2
1998/99	431 797	443 017	874 814	144.2	165.4	154.1	50.6

Source: Ministry of Education.

503. At the secondary level, the progress index is also noticeably more significant among girls than among boys, increasing from 100 in 1992/93 to 165.4 for girls and 144.2 for boys in 1998/99, while the enrolment rate for girls increased over the same period from 47.2 per cent to 50.6 per cent, first overtaking boys in 1997/98.

504. An analysis based on the progress index and on the enrolment rate for girls in comparison with the total enrolment largely confirms that the gender gaps with respect to the number of pupils in full-time education have narrowed and more quickly so in predominantly rural areas such as Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid, where the figures stand respectively at 131.1 and 135.6 against 121.1 for the Tunis area (from 1994/95 to 1997/98).

505. As a result of the concurrent narrowing of the gaps between the sexes and regions, simultaneous joint efforts are being made on all fronts in connection with investment, the basic school infrastructure, access to the system and the organization of teaching, as well as in connection with the fight against poverty and decentralization of the development policy.

Number of girls in full-time education in rural and urban environments (second cycle of basic education and secondary education)

	1994/95			1998/99			Progress index for girls
Regions	Total pupils	Girls	% Girls	Total pupils	Girls	% Girls	1994/95-1998/99
Tunis	72 681	38 022	52.31	89 939	47 570	52.9	125.1
Kasserine	25 936	10 970	42.29	34 602	15 677	45.3	142.9
Sidi Bouzid	28 908	12 084	41.80	37 941	17 536	46.2	145.1
Overall total	662 222	320 055	48.33	874 814	443 017	50.6	138.4

Source: Ministry of Education.

(b) Percentage in full-time education

506. In the tables below, the growth in the rate of access to education shows that girls are entering full-time education at a faster pace than boys, leading to a full balance between both sexes at six years of age and noticeable progress in the case of the 6-12 age group, the gap between the two sexes having fallen from 6.8 points in 1992/93 to 1 in 1998/99.

Percentage in full-time education at the age of six

	Boys	Girls	Total
1992/93	96.6	93.3	95.0
1993/94	97.7	94.5	96.1
1994/95	99.1	96.9	98.0
1995/96	99.1	98.9	99.0
1996/97	99.1	99.0	99.1
1997/98	99.0	99.0	99.0
1998/99	99.1	99.1	99.1

Source: Ministry of Education.

Percentage in full-time education between the ages of 6 and 12

	Boys	Girls	Total
1992/93	92.0	85.2	88.7
1993/94	94.1	87.0	90.6
1994/95	94.5	87.4	91.0
1995/96	94.4	89.4	92.0
1996/97	93.7	90.8	92.3
1997/98	93.0	91.5	92.3
1998/99	92.8	91.8	92.3

Source: Ministry of Education.

II.1.2. Improvement in the school performance of girls

507. In basic education, the promotion rates of boys and girls progressed at an almost identical pace, as indicated by the following table covering the period 1992/93-1996/97. Girls, however, remain ahead, as their promotion rate is systematically higher by between one and four points and is sometimes as high as six points.

(a) In the first cycle of basic education

Promotion rate by education level and sex

Year	1st year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year		5th year		6th year	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1992/93	84.4	85.8	82.2	84.7	76.9	81.1	78.4	82.9	72.9	77.5	53.0	57.2
1993/94	84.4	85.9	83.5	86.4	79.1	83.9	80.5	84.9	76.9	80.8	57.9	60.9
1994/95	84.3	86.2	83.3	86.1	79.3	84.0	80.0	85.2	74.9	79.9	57.3	60.6
1995/96	85.0	86.8	83.8	86.5	80.6	85.1	80.8	85.6	75.9	79.9	61.7	65.2
1996/97	83.7	85.7	81.4	85.4	77.0	83.2	77.4	83.5	70.5	77.1	59.1	63.9
1997/98	84.1	86.4	82.8	86.2	78.8	84.2	80.2	84.9	73.8	79.3	60.0	63.7

Source: Ministry of Education.

508. At the level of the sixth year, when there is a regional examination for promotion to the next level, girls achieved a rate of 63.7 per cent against 60 per cent for boys in 1997/98.

509. The promotion rate has progressed both positively and gradually in parallel with the progress of basic education, a situation which has proved to be more advantageous for girls.

Pass rate at the end of the sixth basic year

	Boys	Girls	Total
June 1993	54.1	58.2	56.0
June 1994	58.7	61.7	60.1
June 1995	58.1	61.4	59.7
June 1996	62.2	65.8	64.0
June 1997	59.9	64.6	62.1
June 1998	61.0	64.6	62.7

Source: Ministry of Education.

510. Since gaining the same opportunities of education as a result of the 1989 education reform, girls continue to derive maximum benefit from the opportunities open to them and achieve a better pass rate than boys. As much is apparent from the above table, which shows that the pass rate for girls is clearly higher than for boys in the sixth basic year.

511. At the level of the ninth year of basic school, girls confirm their edge; in June 1998, they attained a pass rate in the final diploma of basic education of 68.8 per cent compared with 66.8 per cent for boys.

(b) In the second cycle of basic education and secondary education

512. The promotion rate for girls is also higher than for boys at practically every level in secondary education.

Promotion rate by education level and sex (secondary)

	91/92		92/93		93/94		94/95		95/96		96/97		97/98	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
First year	76.5	84.5	71.3	80.5	72.7	81.2	73.1	82.4	67.0	77.4	63.1	75.4	62.1	75.0
Second year	75.6	84.5	79.0	86.6	77.4	85.3	77.1	85.3	75.4	84.5	59.5	73.3	59.3	71.8
Third year	68.2	72.1	71.1	76.5	73.8	79.8	82.2	87.6	78.7	85.1	83.7	89.9	67.2	69.2
Fourth year	72.1	75.2	71.7	75.2	73.4	75.7	73.3	76.8	67.1	72.3	66.2	72.2	64.3	70.1
Fifth year	79.1	86.1	70.5	69.3	66.3	65.5	64.4	64.1	62.7	63.9	62.9	63.9	63.3	66.2
Sixth year	73.5	82.6	75.2	85.2	74.5	83.8	74.4	83.3	74.1	84.4	75.1	83.6	74.3	84.1
Seventh year	45.3	40.2	45.0	37.5	42.7	38.1	45.1	39.1	42.6	38.4	49.9	44.2	49.8	48.9

Source: Ministry of Education.

Rates of admission to the baccalaureate 1994-1999 (per cent)

	June 1944		June 1995		June 1966		June 1997		June 1998		June 1999	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Humanities	41.3	36.9	38.1	33.2	38.5	41.3	36.9	38.1	33.2	38.5	56.3	58.0
Mathematics	66.7	68.8	56.9	61.4	58.2	66.7	68.8	56.9	61.4	58.2	66.6	68.3
Sciences	36.5	37.5	50.7	51.8	40.8	36.5	37.5	50.7	51.8	40.8	54.6	57.3
Mathematics-technology	48.0	24.3	74.0	66.1	-	48.0	24.3	74.0	66.1	-	-	-
Technology	-	-	39.5	26.2	42.7	-	-	39.5	26.2	42.7	60.4	55.1
Economics-management	-	-	28.8	26.8	32.7	-	-	28.8	26.8	32.7	58.2	59.6
TOTAL	43.1	38.3	45.5	39.7	43.3	43.1	38.3	45.5	39.7	43.3	59.8	59.3

Source: Ministry of Education.

513. An examination of the overall rate of admission to the baccalaureate between June 1993 and June 1998 shows that the admission rate for girls was lower than for boys. However, the gap is progressively diminishing, having fallen from 7.3 in 1993 to 4.3 in 1996 and 1 in 1998. In other words, in June 1998, the rate for girls was 49.1 per cent against 50.1 per cent for boys.

514. It is in the mathematics and science sections, however, that the pass rate for girls (out of 100 per cent of girls) is at its highest. In June 1998, their pass rate for the mathematics baccalaureate was 65 per cent against 62 per cent for boys; for the science baccalaureate, the admission rate for girls was 59.9 per cent, whereas for boys it was 56 per cent. For the technology and economics baccalaureates, the admission rate for girls is gradually rising year by year. The admission rate for girls to the technological baccalaureate thus increased from 26.2 per cent in June 1995 to 37.5 per cent in June 1998. Similarly, their admission rate to the economics and management baccalaureate increased from 26.8 per cent in June 1995 to 28.7 per cent in June 1998.

515. Girls also achieve noticeably better pass rates in the national competitive examination for entrance to the experimental lycées that attract the most deserving students and the future elites. In June 1997, the admission rates stood at 62.8 per cent for girls against only 37.2 per cent for boys, a trend which was repeated in June 1998 and 1999. This performance on the part of girls is also reproduced among the successful candidates for the baccalaureate in humanities, experimental sciences and economics and management.

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II.2. New system of curriculum counselling

516. The progression towards achieving an overall balance in attendance at educational institutions for both sexes is accompanied by a concern to ensure a representative balance among all the different courses of study. Under the education system, pupils have full access to all courses, without discrimination, and all the laws regulating the education system stress and encourage such equality.

517. In order to promote equal opportunities between the sexes in matters of educational guidance, in 1995/96, the Ministry of Education created a body of curriculum counsellors, whose tasks include that of ensuring that young girls are aware of the opportunities open to them in the sciences and in technology in particular by developing their sense of self-esteem and helping them to embark on the future.

518. Institutional measures have been taken to encourage girls to pursue technical and science subjects, to which end a media campaign was conducted.

519. As a result of these measures, more girls were inclined to pursue scientific, economic and technical fields, bringing about a relative fall in the numbers of girls pursuing humanities.

Pursuit of subjects in secondary education

	1994/95			1996/97			1998/99		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Humanities	18.3	43.8	30.8	16.7	41.0	29.2	16.1	37.3	27.5
Mathematics	24.6	12.0	18.3	28.1	14.1	20.9	28.2	15.8	21.5
Sciences	21.4	22.6	22.0	20.7	25.0	23.0	19.3	24.8	22.2
Technology	20.9	4.3	12.8	20.9	4.5	12.4	22.6	4.5	12.9
Economics and management	14.8	17.3	16.1	13.6	15.4	14.5	13.7	17.6	15.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Ministry of Education.

520. From studying the above figures, it can be said that positive progress has already been achieved in steering girls towards the pursuit of science and technology subjects.

521. The proportion of girls pursuing the study of humanities fell from 43.8 per cent in 1998/99 to 37.3 per cent in 1998/99, whereas the proportion pursuing the study of mathematics rose from 12 per cent to 15.8 per cent and from 22.6 per cent to 24.8 per cent in the case of experimental sciences. In technology, however, there was only a slight upward movement (from 4.3 per cent in 1994/95 to 4.5 per cent in 1998/99).

522. It should be noted that the proportion of girls pursuing economics and management is higher than among boys (17.6 per cent for girls against 13.7 per cent for boys).

523. The field of humanities continues to attract a substantial number of girls from rural areas: in the school year 1998/99, for example, 52.2 per cent of girls from Kasserine and 44.1 per cent from Kairouan were attracted to this field compared with a national average for girls of 37.3 per cent.

524. In December 1997, a unit was established in the Ministry of Education with responsibility for monitoring implementation of the measures taken to provide school pupils with curriculum counselling and for carrying out activities in that connection. As a result, a better distribution of girls throughout the different subjects was achieved.

II.3. Combating schooling losses

525. This information, which illustrates the reduction in the incidence of school drop-out, is provided in response to the recommendation made on the subject by the Committee following its consideration of Tunisia's initial and second periodic reports in 1995.

526. The following statistics highlight a continuing downward trend in the number of school drop-outs, which is chiefly to the advantage of girls, in primary, secondary and higher education.

II.3.1. In the first cycle of basic education

Drop-out rate by level of education and sex
(first cycle of basic education)

School year	First year		Second year		Third year		Fourth year		Fifth year		Sixth year		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1992/93	0.9	1.2	0.7	1.1	2.4	2.7	3.4	3.1	6.2	5.5	18.2	14.9	4.9	4.4
1993/94	1.1	1.4	0.6	0.8	2.3	2.0	3.1	2.7	5.2	4.8	17.8	15.5	4.8	4.3
1994/95	0.9	1.1	0.5	0.8	2.0	2.0	2.9	2.2	5.0	4.3	17.4	13.9	4.7	4.0
1995/96	1.4	1.4	0.8	1.2	2.3	1.9	3.6	2.8	5.8	4.7	15.0	12.2	4.9	4.1
1996/97	1.2	1.4	0.8	1.0	2.2	1.9	3.4	2.7	5.1	4.2	8.3	7.0	3.5	3.1
1997/98	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.0	2.4	1.9	3.1	2.7	5.0	3.9	9.2	7.8	3.7	3.2

Source: Ministry of Education.

527. In the first cycle of basic education, the school drop-out rate for girls has fallen considerably since 1992/93. Although this rate was higher for girls prior to the education reform (7.5 per cent in 1979/80), it fell to 4.4 per cent in 1992/93 and further to 3.2 per cent in 1997/98. The drop-out rate for boys has also undoubtedly fallen over this period, but remains slightly higher than for girls.

II.3.2. In the second cycle of basic education and secondary education

Drop-out rate by school year and by sex
(second cycle of basic education and secondary education)

	98/99		92/93		93/94		94/95		95/96		96/97		97/98	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
First year	6.5	4.2	9.1	5.3	7.7	5.0	7.7	5.2	9.1	5.5	10.4	6.5	10.4	6.5
Second year	7.2	4.0	6.9	4.0	8.4	4.9	8.6	5.0	12.0	6.7	13.0	7.6	13.0	7.6
Third year	12.0	9.0	9.8	6.6	6.6	4.2	8.6	5.6	7.2	4.1	10.8	8.7	10.8	8.7
Fourth year	12.7	9.1	12.1	9.5	10.9	8.3	13.3	8.8	15.2	10.2	14.7	10.9	14.7	10.9
Fifth year	10.7	9.9	14.2	13.6	16.2	16.0	15.3	14.2	14.9	13.3	13.6	12.2	13.6	12.2
Sixth year	15.9	7.7	12.0	5.6	10.0	5.4	11.1	5.5	9.4	5.2	7.4	3.6	7.4	3.6
Seventh year	19.7	22.0	17.0	17.6	14.8	17.8	19.8	19.1	17.7	17.2	10.0	10.5	10.0	10.5
Total	10.5	8.1	10.5	8.0	9.7	7.7	10.9	8.1	11.5	8.2	11.7	8.5	11.7	8.5

Source: Ministry of Education.

528. In secondary education, the drop-out rate for girls has been clearly lower than for boys since 1992/93 at all levels. Drop-outs owing to the fact that entitlement to full-time education has expired occur in the seventh year, when the drop-out rate for girls reaches or slightly exceeds the rate for boys.

II.3.3. Main factors behind the reduced schooling losses among girls

529. Premature school drop-out among girls is increasingly on the decline and noticeably so in the first and second cycles of basic education and in secondary education.

530. In the first and second cycles of basic education, the introduction by the State of compulsory education (Act of 29 July 1991) and the efforts to expand schools in rural areas, build them closer to areas of habitation (construction of schools by the National Solidarity Fund 26-26 in the most deprived areas) and adapt timetables (freezing of timetables in rural areas) have substantially lessened the premature withdrawal of girls from school by their families.

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531. In secondary education, the premature school drop-out rate for girls, which is not only lower than for boys but is also constantly falling, is most often associated with the fact that entitlement to full-time education expires.

532. A considerable number of such pupils are accommodated by private establishments:

- In the first cycle of basic education, 42 private establishments accommodated 10,008 pupils (47.7 per cent of whom were girls) in 1998/99;

- In the second cycle of basic education and in secondary education, 324 private establishments accommodated 63,912 pupils (34.7 per cent of whom were girls) in 1998/99.

533. The programme for social aid in schools that went hand in hand with the reform of education took shape primarily with the establishment of units engaged in activities aimed at preventing failure and premature school drop-out by dealing with cases identified in schools within the framework of a multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach (health, social affairs and justice).

534. In 1995/96, there were 1,364 social aid units altogether. The programme, which, during the 1997/98 school year, covered a total of 909 establishments (673 in the primary sector and 237 in the secondary sector, comprising 715,709 pupils in all), was assessed and upgraded with a view to improving the means of assistance and establishing regional teams to carry out training and supervision.

535. The results of the survey conducted in 1990/91 by the National Union of Tunisian women (UNFT) in conjunction with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Science showed that girls who dropped out of school at the primary level did so mainly for reasons of family (52.1 per cent), performance (19.3 per cent) and economics (11.8 per cent). In today's education system, however, it can no longer be demonstrated that the factors responsible for drop-out in the 1990s have the same impact. The family, which was the main cause of drop-out in 1990, is now certainly the lowest-ranking factor.

536. Despite the substantial decline in the number of premature school drop-outs, the public authorities are now pursuing the goal of ensuring that all pupils remain in basic education. In this context, during 1998, a commission explored ways and means of achieving that goal. The Ministry of Education is in the process of establishing a sizeable mechanism specifically based on a reform of teaching, with focus on the basic skills taught between the ages of 6 and 16, and on the establishment of a network of priority education zones with a view to more effectively combating regional disparities.

537. The school drop-out rate, which has fallen considerably, is therefore likely to fall even lower under the combined effect of the multidimensional strategies and solidarity programmes set up by the State.

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538. CREDIF is contributing to this effort to reduce disparities between the sexes by conducting a study on the disparities between girls and boys in the field of education. This study will be carried out during the lifetime of the current development plan and is intended to gauge and provide more knowledge about the causes of school failure and drop-out among girls in the areas where disparities still persist. It will help to synchronize the efforts of the public authorities to resolve this problem.

II.4. Changing the image of women through education programmes and school textbooks

539. In accordance with the principles on which it was based, the education reform initiated in 1989 led to an extremely thorough review of all school textbooks, from which any images portraying women as inferior were more or less completely expurgated.

540. As stipulated in article 1, paragraph 3, of Act No. 91-65 of 29 July 1991, one of the objectives of the education system is to "prepare pupils for a life in which there is no place for any form of discrimination or segregation on the basis of sex, social origin, race or religion".

541. By analysing of the content of school programmes and textbooks developed in accordance with the guidelines for the reform of education and the establishment of basic education, the principle of equality between the sexes could be established.

542. It is clear from the laws governing education that women are recognized as equals with men and that they constitute social and family partners who have their own natural place in the social fabric as a matter of course. This recognition is plainly evident in all the textbooks used in the first to fifth years of school in as much as they present women in a variety of situations, leading pupils to subscribe to the idea of the equality of both sexes that continues throughout education.

543. Images associated with the traditional division of social roles between the sexes have been gradually forced to give way to a more egalitarian view of the relationships between men and women through which women are also understood to be agents of productive and creative work.

II.5. Teaching staff (cf. paras. 344-347)

III. Higher education

544. Higher education in Tunisia is regarded as a decisive stage in the development of young people and the fulfilment of their rights of access to knowledge and science.

545. The objective of higher education is to foster respect for human rights in young people, together with the principles of democracy, freedom and tolerance, and to endow Tunisia with a management that is equipped to contribute to the country's development.

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III.1. Recent reforms in higher education

546. Since the early 1990s, higher education has undergone a series of reforms, including the creation of a network of institutes and higher schools offering technology and management training for middle management (technicians), such as the Higher Institute of Technical Studies (ISET), as well as colleges for training top engineers, such as the Preparatory Institute for Scientific and Technical Studies (IPEST), the Tunis Polytechnic School (EPT) and the National Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (INSAT), and colleges for training top teachers, such as the Ecole Nationale Supérieure (ENS). With a view to adapting training to the needs of the economy and society, these reforms also affected the existing postgraduate system in terms of its programmes and its teaching and assessment methods, as in the case of Ezzitouna University, which specializes in theological studies.

547. The aim of these reforms is to cultivate in young Tunisians a respect for human rights and to instil in them the principles of democracy, freedom and tolerance. They also aim to endow Tunisia with a management trained in the new technologies which is in a position to ensure the optimum conditions for Tunisia's integration into a radically changing world and to further enrichment of the world's cultural heritage and of universal knowledge.

III.2. The status of women in higher education

Students

548. In 1998/99, the number of students, which amounted to only about 27,000 in 1978, had grown to 155,120. In 20 years, their number has increased more than fivefold. This high growth, however, occurred mainly during the last decade. The student enrolment, which grew by only 63.5 per cent between 1977 and 1987, increased by almost 200 per cent between 1987 and 1997.

549. This growth was accompanied by a stronger female presence in that the proportion of women students has been constantly rising, increasing from 37.2 per cent in 1987/88 to 48.3 per cent in 1998/99 and 50.4 per cent in 1999/2000. As a result of this growth, the number in full-time education in the 20-24 age group, which was previously very low, increased significantly.

Student enrolment 1988-1999

Year	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00
Students	54 466	62 658	68 535	76 097	87 780	96 101	102 682	112 634	121 787	137 024	155 120	180 044
Of which girls	20 596	23 989	26 989	30 832	36 121	40 570	44 230	49 242	54 278	62 901	74 924	90 694
% of girls	37.8	38.3	39.4	40.5	41.1	42.2	43.1	43.7	44.6	45.9	48.3	50.4

Source: Ministry of Higher Education.

Student enrolment by sex in absolute numbers and indices

	Enrolment			Progress index		
School year	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Percentage of girls
1980/81	22 390	9 437	31 827	100	100	29.7
1985/86	26 770	14 824	41 594	120	157	35.6
1990/91	41 546	26 989	68 535	186	286	39.4
1995/96	63 392	49 242	112 634	283	522	43.7
1996/97	67 509	54 278	121 787	302	575	44.6
1997/98	74 123	62 901	137 024	331	666	45.9
1998/99	80 196	74 924	155 120	358	793	48.3

Source: Ministry of Higher Education.

550. Female enrolment increased by 7.9 between 1980 and 1998, whereas male enrolment increased at only half that pace, having grown by only 3.5. The female enrolment rate increased substantially during the decade 1990-2000 in particular until it became fully equal on attaining 50.4 per cent in 1999/2000.

Subject counselling

551. While university access is a right guaranteed to all holders of the baccalaureate, subjects are chosen by means of a nationwide counselling system which aims to ensure, on the basis of merit, the best possible match between the candidates' own wishes (after advice from subject counsellors on which subjects of study to pursue) and the needs of the national economy as indicated by the places offered by educational establishments. In the last few years, this system, which is fully transparent, has been improved and modified in order to minimize any shortcomings. Accordingly, a system of reserve quotas has been introduced for all subject areas in each type of baccalaureate, visits are arranged to enable candidates to rationalize their choices and advantages are offered as an incentive for students to choose to pursue their studies in educational establishments which are geographically close to their homes (a move which encourages girls in inland regions to pursue their studies in nearby towns).

552. With regard to access to learning institutions, the progression towards complete equality for both sexes is accompanied by a concern for equal representation in all types and fields of study, both at the secondary and higher levels of education.

Graduates from higher education by sex and subject area

Subject area	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97
1. Fundamental sciences					
Total graduates	554	835	1 119	1 265	1 748
Proportion of girls	161	259	312	345	629
Percentage of girls	29.1	31	27.9	27.3	36
2. Technical sciences					
Total graduates	1 326	1 324	1 411	1 317	1 443
Proportion of girls	164	167	241	201	230
Percentage of girls	12.4	12.6	17.1	15.3	15.9
3. Literature and human sciences					
Total graduates	3 265	4 082	4 514	5 005	5 278
Proportion of girls	1 737	2 128	2 415	2 616	2 718
Percentage of girls	53.2	52.1	53.5	52.3	51.5
4. Law, economics and management					
Total graduates	3 177	3 681	4 243	4 504	5 513
Proportion of girls	1 277	1 555	1 741	1 864	2 240
Percentage of girls	40.2	42.2	41.0	41.4	40.6
5. Medical and biological sciences					
Total graduates	1 412	1 508	1 712	1 946	1 275
Proportion of girls	829	845	972	1 134	757
Percentage of girls	58.7	56.0	57.0	58.3	59.4
6. Agricultural sciences					
Total graduates	330	224	395	510	342
Proportion of girls	81	60	126	175	111
Percentage of girls	24.5	26.8	31.9	34.3	32.5
All subject areas					
Total graduates	10 064	11 654	13 649	14 565	15 599
Proportion of girls	4 249	5 014	5 810	6 335	6 685
Percentage of girls	42.2	43.0	42.6	43.5	42.4

Source: Ministry of Higher Education.

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553. As for the breakdown by sector, it should be noted that between 1980/81 and 1997/98, the proportion of female enrolment grew significantly in all subject areas, particularly in literature and the human sciences, the medical sciences, law and economics.

Access to diplomas

554. The above table shows that girls are increasingly entering scientific and technical branches of study, their proportion having increased between 1992/93 and 1996/97 from 29.1 per cent to 36 per cent in the fundamental sciences, from 24.5 per cent to 32.5 per cent in the agricultural sciences and from 12.4 per cent to 15.9 per cent in the technical sciences. The rebalancing now under way in steering girls towards secondary education is starting to have an impact in higher education so that, on completion of study, the proportion of girls in the fundamental sciences and technical sections is constantly improving.

Access to university degrees

555. At university level, girls benefit to more or less the same extent as men from scholarships and university loans which are granted in accordance with student needs and the opportunities provided by the Ministry of Higher Education. Girls are accorded a slightly greater preference when it comes to accommodation, a matter in which positive discrimination towards them has been introduced.

556. In 1998/99, the overall number of students in accommodation stood at 45,061, including 27,099 girls (or, in other words, 60.1 per cent). The breakdown of students by year of residence shows that girls are in a clearly favourable position to boys:

- 58.41 per cent of students in accommodation are resident for the first year (53.1 per cent of whom are girls);
- 28.55 per cent are resident for the second year (64.5 per cent of whom are girls);
- 10.02 per cent are resident for the third year (82.6 per cent of whom are girls);
- 2.72 per cent are resident for the fourth year (80.4 per cent of whom are girls);
- 0.30 per cent are resident for the fifth year (79.7 per cent of whom are girls).

Drop-out from higher education

557. In the last few years, the drop-out rate has fallen considerably following improvements in the internal performance of the system, although in higher education, the cause of drop-out is usually because registration has expired. The following table shows the changes in the drop-out rates for the academic

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years 1994/95 and 1995/96, highlighting the fact that the rate is lower among girls in the first, second and third cycles and still falling.

Drop-out rate in higher education

	1994/95				1995/96			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %
1st cycle*	2 236	6.6	1 411	5	2 133	5.8	1 407	4.6
2nd and 3rd cycles	105	0.6	69	0.5	53	0.3	17	0.1
Total	2 341	4.5	1 480	3.6	2 186	3.9	1 424	2.9

	1997/98				1998/99			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %	Drop-outs	Drop-out rate %
1st cycle*	2 215	5.6	1 563	3.9	3 000	6.1	2 286	4.7
2nd and 3rd cycles	81	0.3	58	0.3	152	0.5	48	0.2
Total	2 296	3.3	1 621	2.7	3 152	4.2	2 334	3.3

* This refers to those excluded at the end of the academic year following expiration of their registration.

Status of women in teaching

558. As indicated in the table below, the numbers of women teaching in higher education have clearly improved. As such, their proportions increased from 21.66 per cent in 1991/92 to 26.5 per cent in 1994/95 and 29.1 per cent in 1998/99, thus gaining almost nine points in seven years, which is striking progress. There is certainly an even larger number of women at the assistant grade, given that it doubled during the same period, although there is nothing to prevent them from rising to higher grades.

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Status of women in teaching

	94/95			95/96			96/97			97/98			98/99		
	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%
Professor	41	417	9.8	37	408	9.1	39	407	9.6	40	414	9.7	37	454	8.1
Senior lecturer	26	322	8.1	24	307	7.8	34	339	10.0	27	312	8.7	36	329	10.9
Assistant lecturer	384	1 547	24.8	361	1 696	21.3	376	1 818	20.7	479	2 133	22.5	483	2 163	22.3
Assistant	471	1 564	30.5	569	1 762	32.3	543	1 715	31.7	663	1 861	35.6	854	2 218	38.5
Professor of secondary studies	350	951	36.8	360	932	38.6	389	956	40.7	364	887	41.0	466	1 113	41.9
Professor at a teaching hospital	19	140	13.6	27	170	15.9	24	167	14.4	38	232	16.4	40	246	16.3
Senior lecturer at a teaching hospital	56	283	19.8	60	311	19.3	71	337	21.1	67	327	20.5	80	361	22.2
Assistant lecturer at a teaching hospital	72	398	18.1	109	437	24.9	116	411	28.2	141	472	29.9	157	526	29.8
Others	100	340	29.4	147	458	32.1	174	491	35.4	218	625	34.9	247	851	29.0
Total	1 519	5 944	26.5	1 694	6 481	26.1	1 766	6 641	26.6	2 037	7 263	28.0	2 400	8 261	29.1

Source: Ministry of Higher Education.

IV. Sport in schools and universities

IV.1. Teaching of physical education

559. Following the reform of the education system, physical education became a full part of the curriculum and therefore compulsory in the various cycles of education for both boys and girls.

IV.2. Cultural and sports activities

560. Cultural and sports activities are an integral part of the education system and constitute one of the goals of the reform aimed at guaranteeing an all-round education through the school syllabuses. School syllabuses have been enriched through a variety of cultural disciplines, such as music, fine arts and drama. Schools are now open to cultural forums with which they have two-way exchanges.

561. The policy on education has strengthened cultural activities in schools through the introduction of various incentives, including the Prize of the

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President of the Republic awarded for the promotion of cultural activities in schools and universities (Decree No. 1274 of 7 July 1992). Here again, a higher number of girls have received this prize than boys.

562. There are school sports associations in lycées and colleges and girls practise the sport of their choice, as do boys. Girls are often selected for enrolment in the sports lycée or for membership of regional or national sports teams in their chosen sport. They may also join a public team of their choice.

563. In addition, Tunisian families are now much more aware of sports and the numerous advantages which they offer. The development of female sports clubs and the increase in the number of girls making use of their facilities are evidence of the growing importance which girls now attach to sports activities.

V. Literacy

564. Following their consideration of the initial and second periodic reports in 1995, the members of the Committee requested further information on illiteracy and the literacy efforts under way in Tunisia. The following information is an attempt to respond to this request.

V.1. Statistical indicators

565. Following the general census of population and housing conducted in 1994, the illiteracy rate was estimated at 31.7 per cent compared with 37.2 per cent in 1989, and at 42.3 per cent among women compared with 48.3 per cent in 1989.

566. The national survey on population and employment conducted in 1999 showed an illiteracy rate of 27 per cent among inhabitants aged over 10 and of 9.1 per cent among inhabitants aged under 30, thus confirming a substantial fall compared with the results of the national census of 1994. Among women, the rate fell to 36 per cent against 17.7 per cent among men (or in other words, 53.2 per cent in rural areas against 26.4 per cent in urban areas).

567. Over the past 30 years, Tunisia has recorded a fall in the female illiteracy rate from 82.4 per cent in 1966 to 42.3 per cent in 1994, which is a drop of just under 50 per cent.

Change in the illiteracy rate since 1966 (per cent)

Census	1966	1975	1984	1989			1994			1999		
				Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Males	53.9	42.3	34.6	26.4	19.1	37.6	21.2	14.5	32.2	17.7	11.8	28.2
Females	82.4	67.9	58.1	48.3	36.6	66.1	42.3	31.3	60.1	36.2	26.4	53.2
Overall	67.9	54.9	46.2	37.2	27.7	51.7	31.7	22.8	46.2	27.0	19.0	40.8

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

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568. In addition, the illiteracy rate increases with age. Among young people (aged 10-14), the rate is only 6.3 per cent, whereas it rises to 40 per cent among those in the 40-44 age group and reaches 69.2 per cent among the over-50s.

569. The national survey on population and employment conducted in 1999 showed a considerable decline in the national illiteracy rate, which fell to 27 per cent among inhabitants under 10 years of age. Female illiteracy, however, remains high, with a rate of 36.3 per cent compared with 17.7 per cent among men in the same age groups.

Illiteracy rates by sex and environment among the lower age groups (1989)

Age group	Urban		Rural		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
10-14 years	1.9	3.4	5.6	25.2	3.5	13.3	8.3
15-19 years	2.4	7.6	9.3	42.5	5.3	22.4	13.7
20-24 years	4.0	15.5	18.8	62.8	9.7	33.9	21.6
25-29 years	5.4	19.6	22.1	65.2	11.7	35.7	23.5

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

Illiteracy rates by sex and environment among the lower age groups (1994)

Age group	Urban		Rural		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
10-14 years	1.7	2.5	5.7	19.3	3.4	9.4	6.3
15-19 years	1.8	4.5	8.1	29.1	4.4	14.9	9.6
20-24 years	2.9	9.4	12.5	46.1	6.6	24.1	15.3
25-29 years	5.3	22.7	22.7	64.6	11.4	34.7	23.3

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

570. The national survey on population and employment conducted in 1999 also revealed that female illiteracy among the under-30s stood at 13.6 per cent nationwide, or in other words, 27.1 per cent in rural areas (8.8 per cent among men) compared with 5 per cent in urban areas (2.2 per cent among men).

571. The persistent disparities between the sexes in regard to illiteracy, despite the appreciable improvement in the school enrolment rates for girls, is

explained by the residual proportion of elderly persons who are "irreducible" and among whom women are more numerous than men.

V.2. National literacy strategy

572. A national programme to combat illiteracy covering the period of the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Economic and Social Development Plans (1992-2006) has been implemented with a view to:

- Eradicating illiteracy among the 15-44 age group;
- Narrowing the difference in the illiteracy rate between males and females by specifically aiming to reduce illiteracy among rural women;
- Preventing any backslide into illiteracy.

573. Since 1993, an institutional system has been in place to facilitate and ensure achievement of the objectives of the national programme to combat illiteracy: a national commission to combat illiteracy has been set up, together with local and regional commissions, their main task being to follow up and implement local, regional and national programmes. A central office for adult literacy and education has also been established within the Ministry of Social Affairs. It is responsible for drawing up national programmes to combat illiteracy, for ensuring assessment and follow-up and for providing the necessary technical support to the different social partners and, more particularly, to associations.

574. The national literacy programme developed various activities during the period 1994-1998, which included:

- Formulating a system of planning, assessment and follow-up with a view to rationalizing approaches to the achievement of objectives;
- Undertaking, in association with partners, a programme aimed at integrating literacy activities into development projects;
- Establishing a system of partnership with non-governmental organizations.

575. In addition to teaching reading, writing and arithmetic (organic literacy), the programme offers participants the benefit of social education classes on matters of health, family and civic responsibility (social communication), as well as basic skills, dressmaking and agriculture (technical and manual skills), thus enhancing the social integration of women. The courses extend over three years, corresponding to a basic level, a further level and a level in which the knowledge already acquired is consolidated.

576. Within the framework of the new integrated approach to literacy, the implementation of programmes to combat illiteracy has the effect of strengthening a number of specific programmes aimed at eradicating illiteracy among young girls and offering them the benefit of practical training at the same time. Such training is given in centres attached to various

non-governmental organizations (UNFT, OTEF) or as part of regional development programmes in the centres for young rural women and/or in agricultural training centres.

577. The efforts made during the Eighth Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996) to achieve the objective of the first national programme to combat illiteracy had the direct effect of positively mobilizing the target population, in particular women and young girls over the age of 15.

578. In order to pursue and strengthen the efforts made during the first programme to combat illiteracy, the strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs throughout the Ninth Plan is to focus on consolidating the gains already achieved at the second level and in the post-literacy stage, strengthening the training of literacy instructors, expanding the network of centres and increasing the number of beneficiaries.

579. As a result of the efforts undertaken, the number of women and girls benefiting has risen swiftly ever since the programme in question (1993-1998) was effectively implemented, as indicated by the following table:

Growth of the programme during the period 1993-1998

School year	Number of centres	Number of beneficiaries		
		Total	Female	Percentage
1993/94	153	4 505	2 789	61.9
1994/95	433	17 063	11 050	64.8
1995/96	485	16 484	10 326	62.6
1996/97	591	16 346	13 469	82.4
1997/98	872	25 532	21 903	85.8

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs.

580. During the period of the Ninth Plan (1997-2001), the second programme to combat illiteracy primarily covers young people between the ages of 15 and 29. By the time of its conclusion, this plan should have covered an overall total of about 160,000 illiterate persons, including in particular the female population in rural areas where the illiteracy rate is typically highest. It should also have succeeded in limiting the fall-off rate among learners in the second level and leading them to pursue the post-literacy programme.

Conclusion and prospects

581. As a result of the reform of the Tunisian education system, which is an integral part of the process of overall reform in the interests of social development, equal opportunities were promoted between girls and boys in both rural and urban environments. All the indicators show a clear progression in the rate of female access to the education system and in the performance of the system. The gaps between girls and boys, which have gradually narrowed, have been absorbed and even reversed in favour of girls as far as school promotion and drop-out are concerned.

582. The 1990s were unquestionably conspicuous by attainment of the goal to achieve equality between the sexes in basic and secondary education. This trend should logically continue in higher education over the next decade, if not during the current five-year period.

583. In this context, the goal of the education system in the strategy laid down for the next decade and the Ninth Plan is to reach new stages and succeed in improving the performance of the education system, particularly in terms of quality, training and guidance.

584. The establishment of two systems, the first with a view to combating premature drop-out from school and the second with a view to introducing an assessment programme by the year 2000 for monitoring and assessment of the system's every activity, objective and method, will undoubtedly contribute to the achievement of full equality of opportunity and to improvement of the system's profitability.

585. In addition, with a view to easing the passage of the younger generations into the next century, having imbued them with the values of work, success and excellence, the first steps have been taken to connect lycées and colleges to the internet, which should continue throughout the duration of the Ninth Plan. Primary schools will also be connected to the internet very shortly thereafter.

586. The national consultation on the schools of the future that began in early April 1999 will no doubt mark a significant stage along the way towards achieving these objectives and towards exploring the challenges of the twenty-first century in the context of globalization and the emergence of the information society.

Article 11: Employment

"1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

"(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

"(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

"(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

"(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

"(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

"(f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

"2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

"(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

"(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

"(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

"(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

"3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary."

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Work: a fundamental right

587. The fundamental right of women to work is guaranteed by all the legal texts regulating the employment sector. Tunisia has also acceded to several international instruments which establish this fundamental right.

588. In the dual context of political democratization and economic restructuring, the economic integration of women is regarded as essential. No ambiguity remains concerning the right of women to work, which is assessed both in its legal dimension of an individual human right and in its historic dimension of a strategic choice dictated by development.

589. In accordance with the political will to promote the right of women to work, the working and social environment of women is constantly improving with a view to more effectively integrating female resources into every sphere of activity. Legislation, conditions of service and the childcare infrastructure have had to fall into line with the political will.

I. Legislation

I.1. The fight against discrimination

590. All the texts promulgated after independence explicitly stipulate the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination between men and women at work and provide for specific rights for women. These texts contain provisions which prescribe equality between both sexes and protect women and the duo of "mother and child", while strengthening the productivity of women's resources, which are increasingly sought after by all sectors of the economy.

591. Following the amendments introduced pursuant to Act No. 93-66 of 5 July 1993, the Labour Code included a general article (art. 5 *bis*) in its preamble which expressly prescribes the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination between men and women. Article 5 *bis* provides that: "No discrimination between men and women shall be made in the application of the provisions of this Code and the legislations adopted to implement it."

592. The principle of "equal skills, equal pay" is one which is in force in the civil service.

593. Likewise, pursuant to Act No. 93-66 of 5 July 1993 amending the Labour Code, the provisions of former article 35 were repealed. These provisions, which covered the minimum agricultural wage (SMAG), could have been construed as discriminatory, in particular the provision which specifically referred to the remuneration of women in seasonal agricultural work. The remuneration of seasonal women workers in the agricultural sector is now regulated by the provisions concerning the minimum wage for unskilled agricultural workers.

594. The reform of the Labour Code did away with the last surviving relic of the former legal system that applied to women's employment. The other legal texts, however, were already sufficiently clear and explicit concerning the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination, in which sense they fully echoed the international conventions ratified by Tunisia on this subject.

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595. The Chamber of Deputies adopted Act No. 2000-17 of 7 February 2000 annulling provisions which required that a husband should give prior authorization for his wife to work (art. 831 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts), as well as his authorization for bail (art. 1481, para. 2, of the Code of Obligations and Contracts) and, in the case of bail, for his wife to appear in court (art. 1524, para. 2, of the Code of Obligations and Contracts).

I.2. Specific employment rights of women

I.2.1. Rights in connection with maternity

596. In the public sector, women have the benefit of maternity leave of two months with full pay, which may be extended by taking postnatal leave of four months with half pay, without compromise of the right to promotion and retirement (Act No. 83-112 of 12 December 1983). In the private sector, women have the benefit of maternity leave of 30 days with two-thirds pay and the possibility of a 30-day extension on medical grounds.

597. In addition to the opportunities which it offers in regard to maternity leave and nursing, the Act also provides for the right to work part-time, of which women may take advantage, at their request, with a view to more effectively reconciling their dual responsibilities of work and home. Leave, promotion, allowances and the pension system are not altered by this particular measure.

598. In accordance with article 48 bis of the General Regulations for Civil Servants, supplemented by Act No. 97-83 of 20 December 1997 amending Act No. 83-112 of 12 December 1983 organizing the General Regulations for Civil Servants:

- Women civil servants are entitled to a rest period of one hour for nursing purposes at the start or end of the work session, provided that the duration of that session is not less than four hours.

- In cases where the work is arranged in two sessions, women are granted two rest periods of one hour each at the start or end of the work session, provided that the total minimum period of work is equivalent to seven hours daily.

- The rest period for nursing purposes is granted for a maximum period of six months from the end of the period of maternity leave.

I.2.2. Legal systems for protection of the health and safety of working women

599. Article 77 of the Labour Code provides that "women, whatever their age, may not be employed in underground work in mines and quarries". This provision is in conformity with International Labour Convention No. 45 concerning the Employment of Women in Underground Work in Mines of All Kinds.

600. In addition, the Tunisian labour legislation lays down the principle that night work is prohibited for women, while providing for derogations to this principle.

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601. To that effect, article 66 of the Labour Code provides that "women should not be employed at night, during a period of at least 12 consecutive hours, which must include the period between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m."

602. Pursuant to articles 68 and 71 of the Labour Code, derogations to the principle that night work is prohibited apply only in cases of force majeure, namely:

- When the work entails handling raw materials or materials being processed that are subject to extremely rapid change, where such handling is necessary in order to protect those materials from unavoidable damage;
- To women holding managerial or technical posts entailing responsibility;
- To women employed in the social services who do not normally carry out manual work;
- When, owing to particularly serious circumstances, the national interest so requires, the prohibition of night work for women may be suspended by decree.

603. In accordance with the 1990 Protocol to International Labour Convention No. 89 and in addition to these derogations, article 68-2 of the Labour Code (supplemented by Act No. 96-62 of 15 July 1996) extended the possibility whereby women may work during the night in the following cases:

1. In a determined branch of activity or a determined profession, by order of the Ministry of Social Affairs adopted following the agreement of the professional organizations representing the employers and workers concerned.

2. In one or several enterprises not covered by the above-mentioned order, on authorization of the head of the Labour Inspectorate with regional competence, granted on the basis of an agreement concluded between the head of the enterprise and the union representatives of the workers concerned, and failing that, the enterprise's staff representatives, after consulting the professional organizations representing the employers and workers concerned.

3. In an enterprise not covered by the above-mentioned order and in which no agreement has been concluded concerning adjustment of the night period or the lifting of the ban on night work for women, on authorization of the head of the Medical Labour Inspectorate and under the following conditions:

- The professional organizations representing the employers and workers concerned must be consulted;
- Checks must be made to ascertain that the enterprise provides sufficient guarantees for its female workers in regard to health and safety at work, social services and equality of opportunity and treatment;

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- Checks must be made to ascertain that there are sufficient guarantees of transport for women travelling to and from work;

- The period of authorization, which may be renewed under the same conditions, must be fixed.

I.2.3. Rights in connection with social security benefits

604. Since working women are covered by social security, they are eligible for the same social security benefits as men, with the proviso that certain allowances may not be drawn concurrently, as in the case of family allowances, which are payable only once per household. With this exception, women covered by social security enjoy social security benefits (sickness benefits and health care allowances), as well as retirement, sickness, industrial accident and occupational disease benefits. In the event of death, they may also transfer rights to their spouse and surviving children, who are eligible for such.

605. In addition, a woman subject to specific rights linked to her status, such as maternity leave or maternity benefits, may be eligible for early retirement if she is the mother of three children under 20 years of age or of a disabled child and fulfils the condition of 15 years of service.

606. Act No. 94-88 of 26 July 1994 establishes the means by which the National Social Security Fund may contribute to financing the cost of childcare for mothers who work outside the home.

II. Women's social and working environment

II.1. The General Vocational Training and Employment Policy Act

607. Tunisia has embarked on improving the overall standard of its vocational training system by updating its legislative and regulatory framework, restructuring training establishments and instituting a new pedagogical approach that uses the enterprise as a focal point around which initial training, sandwich training, apprenticeship and permanent training are organized and arranged.

608. This reform, which commenced in 1990, is specifically intended to:

- Promote employment by modernizing employment services;

- Develop vocational information;

- Develop recruitment and integration.

609. Instituting a legal and institutional framework for a new national system of vocational training that is well-developed and recognized, the General Vocational Training and Employment Policy Act attaches major importance to ensuring that both sexes receive guidance and information.

610. As in the case of education in Tunisia, the system of vocational training makes no distinction between the sexes, as the concept of human resources

includes both men and women. In regard to guidance and information, however, the General Policy Act clearly states the need to target adults "of both sexes", bearing in mind the specific needs of women in that area and the concern to promote equal opportunities between men and women.

611. The result of the General Vocational Training and Employment Policy Act has been to:

- Enhance the integration of young people and young girls in particular;
- Strengthen the competitiveness of the economy as a whole;
- Create the introduction of a series of innovative measures, including consultation and coordination arrangements with various social partners (UNFT, UTICA and UGTT) by involving them from the outset in the development and validation of training efforts.

II.2. Social and educational childcare facilities (cf. paras. 363-370)

II.3. Employment stimulation programmes

612. Employment stimulation programmes aim to provide young people with the qualifications which they need, by means of either training periods providing initiation into the world of work in public and private enterprises or in public administrations and local public authorities, or training in respect of which the content is finalized with the enterprise concerned (Job-Training Contract).

613. Between 1994 and 1997, a total of 13,552 young girls benefited from initiation, adaptation and integration programmes at the rate of 55 per cent for the Initiation and Vocational Adaptation Fund (FIAP), 30 to 35 per cent for the secondary level of the Initiation into the World of Work Strategy (SIVP2), 55 to 56 per cent for the higher level of the Initiation into the World of Work Strategy (SIVP1) and the Job-Training Contract (CEF). Girls benefit to the same extent as men from these programmes of initiation into the world of work at the rate of 55 per cent for FIAP, 35 per cent for SIVP2, 55 per cent for SIVP1 and 56 per cent for CEF.

III. The economically active female population

III.1. Growth of the economically active female population

614. According to the most recent census conducted in Tunisia in 1994, the economically active population has grown more rapidly than the country's total population, having achieved an average annual growth rate of 2.6 per cent compared with 2.3 per cent for the total population.

615. An examination of the changes in the structure of the economically active population by sex shows the trend towards an increase in the proportion of women among the total economically active population. This proportion rose from 18.7 per cent in 1975 to 21.3 per cent in 1984 and 23.6 per cent in 1994.

Changes in the economically active population by sex (per cent)

Sex	1975	1984	1994
Female	18.7	21.3	23.1
Male	81.3	78.7	76.9
Total	100	100	100

Source: 1994 census - National Institute of Statistics.

616. The actively employed population had risen on the date of the census to 2,320,610 persons, of whom 1,785,730 were men and 534,880 women, which is 76.9 per cent and 23.1 per cent respectively.

617. The statistical change indicates a slight improvement (from 40.3 per cent to 40.5 per cent) in the employment rate of the adult population between 1989 and 1994 due to an increase in the female employment rate (from 16 per cent to 18.7 per cent) and a slight decline in the male employment rate (from 62.6 per cent to 62.1 per cent).

618. This number is made up of 1,785,730 men and 534,880 women, which is 77 per cent and 23 per cent respectively of the total number of actively employed persons compared with 79.1 per cent and 20.9 per cent respectively in 1989 (survey of population and housing) and 21.3 per cent at the time of the 1984 census.

III.2. The actively employed population by branch of activity and status

619. The number of actively employed women grew from 21.3 per cent in 1984 to 23.1 per cent in 1994. Of these, 69.7 per cent were wage-earners, 13.4 per cent were self-employed, 15.1 per cent were home helps, 0.9 per cent were employers and 0.9 per cent were apprentices throughout the different sectors.

620. As indicated in the following table, an analysis of female employment by sector, branch of activity and status shows that women constitute 7.32 per cent of employers, 15.4 per cent of self-employed persons, 11.96 per cent of wage-earners, 20.9 per cent of apprentices and 33 per cent of those in the informal sector.

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Percentage breakdown of the actively employed population aged 15 and over by sex, branch of usual activity and status (1994)

Occupational status	Agriculture	Manufacturing industries	Services	Unreported	Total
Employers					
Male	96.82	93.18	91.19	87.00	92.68
Female	3.18	6.81	8.81	13.00	7.32
Overall	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Self-employed					
Male	88.64	59.34	93.80	88.74	84.60
Female	11.36	40.66	6.20	11.26	15.40
Overall	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Wage-earners					
Male	88.98	75.71	75.75	75.49	88.04
Female	11.02	24.29	24.25	24.51	11.96
Overall	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apprentices					
Male	74.07	69.42	91.24	77.34	79.10
Female	25.93	30.58	8.76	22.66	20.90
Overall	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Unreported					
Male	60.57	67.47	81.96	66.47	66.91
Female	39.43	32.53	18.14	33.53	33.09
Overall	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Total					
Male	78.59	72.86	79.55	73.92	76.95
Female	21.41	27.14	20.45	26.08	23.05
Overall	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: 1994 census - National Institute of Statistics.

621. In 1994, the economically active female population was distributed among the different sectors at the rate of 20.4 per cent in agriculture, 41.2 per cent in industry and 38.4 per cent in administration and services.

622. The growth in female employment since 1984 highlights three main factors: a decline in the share of agriculture, which fell from 24.7 per cent in 1984 to 20.01 per cent in 1994, a decline in the share of the manufacturing industry (from 45.7 per cent to 39.4 per cent) and, by contrast, a strong increase in the share of services and administration (from 23.9 per cent to 37.6 per cent)..

III.3. The economically active female population by environment

623. The proportion of the actively employed population stands at 65.6 per cent in the urban environment and 34.4 per cent in the rural environment. In the case of the female population, it is over 70 per cent in the urban environment.

624. Women hold 24.6 per cent of the jobs in urban areas and only 20 per cent of those in rural areas. Women's share of the work in rural areas, however, has increased in comparison with 1989, when it stood at 17.6 per cent.

625. The changes in the characteristic features of female employment as shown in the official statistics do not, however, fully reflect the true situation in regard to women's activities, as seasonal employment, work in the home and activities carried out on small family owned farms are not sufficiently taken into account.

III.4. Women and unemployment

626. On the date of the 1994 census, the unemployed population between the ages of 18 and 59 was estimated at 378,406 persons, of whom 279,640 were men and 98,760 women, which is 73.9 per cent and 26.1 per cent respectively.

627. In 1994, the unemployment rate was estimated at 15.6 per cent for the economically active population as a whole, or in other words, 15 per cent for men and 17.2 per cent for women. In 1989, the unemployment rate was 15.3 per cent, or 13.9 per cent for men and 20.9 per cent for women.

Unemployment by sex (per cent)

Sex	1989	1994
Male	13.9	15.0
Female	20.9	17.2
Total	15.3	15.6

Source: 1994 census - National Institute of Statistics.

628. In 1994, 72.2 per cent of unemployed persons were illiterate or educated only to primary level. Although this percentage has decreased since 1984, when it stood at 80.1 per cent, it is still a major feature of unemployment in Tunisia.

Unemployment rate by level of education and sex (1994)

Level of education	Male	Female	Total
None	16.7	19.8	17.6
Primary	17.6	21.4	18.3
Secondary	12.8	14.0	13.1
Higher	3.3	3.7	13.1
Total	15.0	17.02	15.6

Source: 1994 census - National Institute of Statistics.

IV. Women and the employment market

629. The situation of the employment market, run by employment offices and covering only 30 per cent of applications, shows that, during the period 1994-1997, job applications from women fluctuated between 33.3 per cent (1993) and 38.7 per cent (1997).

630. The change in the situation with respect to satisfying the female employment demand shows that such demand reached 53.36 per cent in 1997 compared with 29.4 per cent in 1993.

V. Women and entrepreneurship

631. The national population census showed more than 4,800 enterprises, most of them microenterprises, run by women and employing approximately 100,000 persons. The breakdown of these enterprises by sector shows that 85 per cent were in industry and the craft industry, 8 per cent in commerce and 7 per cent in services.

632. Out of a total of 218 enterprises, four run by women benefited from the national programme to promote standards in industry, representing an investment of 11,118,000 dinars. These enterprises are involved in textiles, the food industry, the electrical industry and the pharmaceutical industry. In addition, two have been retained as part of the pilot programme to promote standards (representing 963 jobs).

633. Women have always invested in microenterprise. It is only during the past 10 years, however, that they have benefited from the finance opportunities provided by industrial and agricultural development funds to the tune of

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5 per cent from the Fund for Industrial Promotion and Development (FOPRODI), 14 per cent from the National Fund for the Promotion of Crafts and Trades (FONAPRA) and 3.3 per cent from the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investments (APIA).

634. Difficulties such as fulfilment of the standard conditions for obtaining credit by providing the satisfactory guarantees required by the banks managing such funds and lack of the qualifications needed for the development of projects eligible for funding from banks are no longer obstacles which prevent women from deriving more benefit from these funds. In fact, the progressive establishment of new mechanisms which encourage microenterprise lends a particular momentum to female entrepreneurship.

635. Within the framework of the National Fund for the Promotion of Crafts and Trades (FONAPRA), the number of occupational identity cards granted to women during the period 1993-1998 rose from 37,865 to 62,464, representing 85 per cent of the total number of cards.

636. At the end of 1997, the creation of the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS), which abolished the condition of satisfactory guarantees and established its own criteria for granting credit, namely the responsibility and competence of the entrepreneur and the feasibility of the project, opened up new horizons for the economic integration of women.

637. Between the establishment of BTS and the end of 1999, women benefited from financing for 27.1 per cent of projects, representing 5,988 projects out of a total of 22,095. Young women between the ages of 18 and 29 have benefited most from such finance (47.7 per cent).

638. At the beginning of the 1990s, a programme for the development of microenterprises was established at the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment and placed under the management of the Tunisian Employment Agency, which set up a programme office with its own services and units in local and regional employment offices. The women concerned have benefited from help with information and from guidance in building up their technical portfolios and gaining access to finance.

639. The proportion of women benefiting from the programme of the Vocational Training and Employment Agency rose from 18 per cent in 1993 to 30.5 per cent in 1997 in the different sectors, mainly textiles, the food industry, leather and footwear, woodwork and services.

VI. Vocational training

VI.1. Training methods

640. Using a variety of methods, vocational training caters for a large group of male and female jobseekers, whose educational attainment varies between basic schooling (nine years of education) to the seventh school year and semi-literacy. The vocational training system offers three methods of training:

- Apprenticeship, which is governed by a contract introduced under the Labour Code, is a full training method open to young men and women between the ages of 15 and 20. It is for those with a poor basic education, as well as for those with a higher level of attainment. The training essentially takes place in-house and is supplemented by theoretical and practical lessons which are intended to improve the knowledge already acquired.

- Initial training for young people who have successfully completed their basic education and who are advised to pursue vocational training or for those who have taken the entrance examination for vocational training centres (those who have completed basic schooling, the fifth, sixth and seventh secondary years or the baccalaureate are accepted) with a view to obtaining a vocational skills certificate (CAP), a higher technician's certificate (BTS) or a professional technician's certificate (BTP).

641. Permanent training, introduced with a view to promoting workers, aims to improve vocational skills. The 1993 reform made it possible to define, through a system of tax rebate for vocational training, an appropriate framework for the development of permanent training made necessary by the rapid growth of technology and the need for enterprises to be competitive.

VI.2. Different training providers

642. As a whole, the vocational training system is open to both sexes and training institutions are mostly mixed, with the exception of a few institutions attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Industry or non-governmental organizations, particularly UNFT. The different providers are divided between the public authorities (35.8 per cent), the private sector (44.8 per cent) and UNFT (19.4 per cent).

643. In addition to the training centres open to men and women, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment has 13 centres for young rural women which are located in rural areas and which generally provide board and lodging.

644. The UNFT centres which benefit from the technical and teaching assistance provided by the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment cater specifically for women in rural and urban fringe areas and aim to establish women in their home regions, the main concern being to provide them technical know-how with a view to their economic integration.

VI.3. Training assessment (1992-1997)

645. Between 1992 and 1997, a total of 144,279 girls were trained in the public system nationwide compared with 90,000 in 1992: 65,419 girls received initial training, sandwich training or were in apprenticeship, 57,000 were trained through the private sector and 21,860 were trained in the facilities offered by non-governmental organizations, primarily UNFT.

646. Whatever the sector or provider, the assessment of vocational training is a positive one, taking into account satisfaction of the needs of those seeking

skilled labour and male and female technicians, of whom there are now 7,359 in the sectoral vocational training centres (1997 report of the Tunisian Family Planning Association (ATPF)) which train mainly technicians (BTP) and higher technicians (BTS) in a variety of specialized fields.

Women holding vocational training certificates in the industry and services sectors

Year	1992		1993		1994		1995		1996		1997		1992/1997	
Training level	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
CAP/ Apprenticeship	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 091	663	424	215	2 172	1		879
CAP/Initial training	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 178	61 5.1%	4 218	701 16.6%	4 245	1 880 44.3%		2 642
BTP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 178	392 33.8%	1 306	473 36.2%	6 051	1 609 26.6%		2 642
BTS	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	24 60%	297	142 47.8%	556	237 42.6%		403
Total	5 683	926	6 719	1 141	5 630	1 320	5 487	1 140	6 245	1 531	13 024	3 727		9 785
Percentage of certificate holders		16.3		16.98		23.44		20.77		24.51		30.44		

Source: Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment.

647. The above table shows that the number of girls holding certificates during the period 1992-1997 amounted to 9,785 for all types of certificate. In 1997, the proportion of girls holding a professional technician's certificate (BTP) amounted to 26.6 per cent, while 42.6 per cent held a higher technician's certificate (BTS) and 44.3 per cent held a vocational skills certificate (CAP).

648. The proportion of girls holding certificates rose from 16.3 per cent in 1992 to 30.44 per cent in 1997.

649. It should also be pointed out that the percentage of girls pursuing initial training is clearly growing in the institutions run directly by the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment.

Growth in trainee enrolment at the institutions of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Trainee enrolment	6 005	8 484	9 247	10 298	10 300	12 901
Female enrolment	1 165	1 933	2 010	2 815	3 193	4 063
Percentage	19.4	22.8	21.7	27.3	31	31.5

Source: Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment.

650. It should also be noted that the efforts of the private sector are essentially concentrated in the tertiary sector (computing, office work, accounting, dressmaking and hairdressing). The certificates awarded are officially recognized on the basis of compliance with the specified requirements for training programmes, the standard of the training staff and the quality of the teaching equipment and facilities used. Women have a significant place in this training sector, which is organized, maintained and controlled by its own legal centre.

651. Girls appear to be more attracted to a level of training which is more widely based on mastering technology and acquiring proficiency in advanced techniques.

652. Girls have only recently gained access to some of the fields which lead to qualifications. Aided by the awareness-raising efforts of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment in conjunction with the media, girls are now steered towards new fields of specialization based on mastering technology and advanced techniques such as electronics and electricity (12.75 per cent), computer-aided graphic design, metal construction (5.44 per cent), equipment maintenance (1.41 per cent) and leather and footwear (25.05 per cent). Their place in the traditional callings of textiles, office work and services is still significant.

653. This also demanded technical training, for which purpose it was necessary to recruit a new generation of instructors from among engineers and higher technicians, including women, who comprise 30 per cent of the total number of technical trainers and training managers.

VI.4. Advancement of young rural women through vocational training

654. As part of the reform of the vocational training system, 13 centres for young rural women attached to the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment were renovated with a view to responding more effectively to the specific vocational training needs of young rural women and facilitating their integration into the dynamics of the economy.

655. A strategy to consolidate the centres for young rural women was placed on the agenda in 1992 and implemented during the Eighth Development Plan in order to guarantee the advancement of young girls through vocational training leading to qualifications. This strategy is part of the new approach to women's training whereby the latter is used as a tool for integration into the dynamics of the economy and not simply with a view to social integration. Tangible results have been achieved in terms of both the quantity and quality of the organization and operation of such training.

656. Training to create enterprises and entrepreneurs (CEFE) has been developed and carried out in these centres with a view to developing the minds needed to engage in entrepreneurship and set up microenterprises. To this end, special teaching has been arranged for women who are either illiterate or who left school prematurely, in which connection a number of training manuals and aids have been produced for each of the modules taught. During the period 1992-1997, 4,000 young rural women benefited from this training.

657. Partnership agreements have been signed between the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment and various organizations with a view to helping these young girls to set up on their own, one example being the cooperation agreement signed with the Tunisian Social Solidarity Union (UTSS). As a result, 60 young rural women have benefited in order to create microenterprises in livestock farming, market gardening and dressmaking.

658. The new system of microcredit established in 1999, in accordance with which the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (TBS) provides a low-interest credit facility for non-governmental organizations, will offer new prospects for the economic integration of girls who have attended the centres for young rural women.

VI.5. Advancement of women through permanent training

659. Permanent training, which is a core concern of the plan of action for the reform of vocational training, has been offered for the last several years, either in the form of training courses arranged with the enterprises concerned or in the form of day, evening or correspondence courses.

660. The State also offers other advantages; for example, it assumes full or partial responsibility for the cost of training staff in industrial, agricultural and fishing enterprises which undertake investments in the interests of mastering and developing technology and improving productivity.

661. In addition to these prerogatives, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment lends its support to the creation and development of inter-enterprise centres by providing them with teaching assistance in particular.

662. These measures have especially benefited women, who represent a significant proportion of the labour force in enterprises which produce textiles or provide services.

663. As at December 1997, out of a total of 67,071 beneficiaries, 12,609 women had benefited from permanent training, representing 18.8 per cent broken down as

follows: 35.5 per cent of senior executives, 22.6 per cent of supervisors and 41.9 per cent of operators.

VII. Mechanisms for positive action

VII.1. Training in gender planning

664. Regarded as a vital instrument for the advancement of women by the Platform for Action produced by the Fourth World Conference on Women, gender planning is one of the fundamental objectives of the strategy for the advancement of women today. The details of training and awareness-raising activities in connection with developing gender-specific indicators which are useful in information gathering, analysis, planning and assessment are therefore finalized, with support from CREDIF, for the benefit of government executives and decision-makers, officers in non-governmental organizations and regional development workers.

665. Since 1993, training has been provided at both the national and international level in the field of goal-driven planning, impact assessment, the participatory approach, communication, gender planning and access to new technologies.

666. In cooperation with CREDIF and with the support of international and regional organizations, MAFF organizes training sessions in gender planning for ministerial executive staff and personnel in non-governmental organizations.

667. A programme for the development of gender statistics has been implemented in association with the National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF and ESCWA. It aims to systematize gender in the statistics used and to develop new gender-specific indicators in order to analyse data on the basis of gender. This programme comprises a study of 50 institutions which produce gender-related statistics, as well as training seminars for statisticians and the construction of technical tools for introduction of the gender approach into the production and analysis of data.

668. Within the framework of South-South cooperation, CREDIF provides international training in the field of "gender, population and development" for Tunisian and African executives involved in government or non-governmental projects for development or for the advancement of women. Designed with a participatory approach which calls on the experience of each individual and promotes exchange between participants, as well as practical case studies, this training consists of seven modules, including one devoted to the formulation of plans of action.

VII.2. Career development training

669. Within the framework of the policy for the promotion of human resources aimed at enhancing the abilities and vocational qualifications of those resources, CREDIF introduced three types of training:

- Training sessions for women executives in the private and public sectors under the heading of "information and training for executive

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women for more effective career development". The objectives of this training are to help the participants to improve the effective operation and development of their respective institutions and to design an analysis scale as a diagnostic tool that is likely to assist them in promoting activities in accordance with global strategies which give them a decisive and lasting advantage.

- Monthly sessions known as "CREDIF circles" which are intended to enable the women participating in the training sessions for women executives to debate a chosen theme with an expert in the subject.

- Training sessions in the psychology of work and the management of human resources for a mixed public, similar to the sessions for women executives.

VII.3. Study of the context of women's work

670. Given the importance of the goal of integrating women into development, CREDIF conducted several studies within the framework of the strategy for women under the Eighth National Development Plan (1992-1996) in order more effectively to determine the status of women and the prospects open to them, as well as detect any hint of discrimination.

671. The report entitled Femmes de Tunisie: situation et perspectives, which was published in 1994, attempts to analyse the process of women's access to work outside the home and the sectors which demonstrate a preference for the employment of women. It also attempts to assess the participation of women in the economics of the household and the nation, as well as their inclusion in the decision-making at government level and in organizations.

672. Conducted in 1995 and published in 1996, the study entitled Le potentiel économique des femmes - le contexte et les perspectives du travail féminin en Tunisie places the difficult issue of women's work and the dynamics of female employment in the national economic context. Highlighting the case of women entrepreneurs, it sets out and assesses the structures which support the economic initiatives of women. The aim of this study is to identify the sectors and regions which offer, on the one hand, the greatest opportunities for women to create profitable small enterprises and, on the other, the supports which women entrepreneurs need (training, capital, credit, equipment and so on).

673. A study entitled Santé et vie familiale des femmes travaillant de nuit was carried out in 1998. It is a comparative study of two groups of women paramedics, one consisting of 166 women who work at night and another of 167 women who work during the day. The aim of this study was to analyse the health and family life of women who work at night. CREDIF also planned to develop another main subject of study in 1999 involving a gender analysis of the status of women who work at night in order to obtain data on unequal opportunities owing to the family, domestic and child-bearing roles of women, as well as work constraints.

674. Within the framework of the strategy for women under the Ninth Plan (1997 2001), CREDIF planned to carry out three major studies:

* Within the framework of the Dynamics-Population-Environment (DYPEN) Programme, a study on the subject of women's work and family strategies in the Tunisian rural setting, based on a multidisciplinary approach, which aims to study at close hand the activity of rural women in four areas in northern and southern Tunisia (Bargou, Kroumirie, Menzel Habib and El Faouar). On the one hand, this work intends to study the role played by women in the productive strategies of farming households, particularly in the context of the processes of economic restructuring under way and, on the other hand, to identify more effectively the contribution made by women to the development of social projects run by rural families and the repercussions of such projects, particularly in regard to the functioning and reproduction of family farming systems. This study will culminate in proposals for action aimed at improving the integration of rural women into the development process and at enhancing their social and economic status within the family and in small farms.

* A study on women agricultural entrepreneurs and craftswomen, which is intended to increase the information known about the status of these two groups and the problems which they encounter. This it will do by conducting action research with various intermediaries (non-governmental organizations, development agencies and so on) and by focusing on a number of "minor problem issues" identified in conjunction with those concerned in different situations and contexts.

* A study on women's working conditions in the textile industries in Tunisia, which has a dual objective in so far as it aims to identify the most salient problems in the field of health and safety at work for women in the textile industry (a sector where female activity, other angles of which have been so widely studied, is heavily concentrated) and to determine on the basis of that identification the priorities for action and the appropriate means of intervention.

VII.4. New technology training

675. Several training seminars have been organized for government executives and non-governmental organizations in order to provide an introduction to use of the internet and new means of communication. In July 1999, the women's organization, Tunisia 21, which organized a course of seminars to debate the scientific, economic and cultural issues at stake in the information society, began a training course in use of the internet and communication technologies for executives in non-governmental organizations. The government and non-governmental executives responsible for the advancement of women also benefited from a training course in use of the internet, organized by the Frederich Ebert Foundation.

Conclusions and prospects

676. The legislative and legal system on which the world of work is based has gradually developed to integrate women on the basis of the principles of "equal skills, equal pay" and inadmissibility of discrimination between the sexes in all aspects of work.

677. Between 1985 and 1994, the women's employment curve continued rising, although it slowed slightly under the joint effect of economic difficulties and the structural adjustment programme. At the same time, the women's unemployment rate is falling, whereas the demand for female employment constantly grew between 1993 and 1997, thus confirming its ongoing rise.

678. One of the priority objectives of the strategy for women under the Ninth Development Plan (1997-2000) is to achieve the more effective integration of women into economic activity, particularly through their access to new technologies, improvement of the professional qualifications of women's human resources, the achievement of equal opportunities in training and retraining, encouragement to women to launch projects within the framework of the national economic guidelines and the promotion of equal opportunities in the field of investment.

679. It is also expected that, as a result of this strategy, 50 per cent of the girls in training in the facilities of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment will move towards subject areas leading to qualifications (a proportion which currently stands at 30 per cent).

680. In the concern to ensure that women's human resources contribute to achieving the national objectives aimed at improving the national economy so that it may successfully integrate into the international economy, a workshop on women was held within the framework of the National Conference on Employment, which took place in July 1998 in Tunis under the distinguished patronage of the Head of State.

681. Jointly organized by CREDIF and UNFT and attended by women executives from every sector, as well as by executives from women's non-governmental organizations and a large number of labour experts, the workshop specifically recommended:

1. The promotion of equal opportunities between the sexes on the employment market, especially by strengthening the knowledge of young women and encouraging them to register with employment offices; awareness-raising for decision-makers; accelerated implementation of the national plan of action for women's vocational training and encouragement for young women to choose the new fields of specialization; the production of a guide to the jobs of the future; and the integration of women into the recruitment structures.

2. Sectoral diversification by ensuring the presence of women in the different sectors of the economy so that they can benefit more effectively from job creation and other similar opportunities:

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* In agriculture, by encouraging women to become involved in the new specialized areas of agriculture, increasing extension services, strengthening training and support for the establishment of microprojects in agriculture, establishing the inadmissibility of discrimination between men and women in accordance with the amendments made to the Labour Code in 1993 and promoting women's employment in agriculture;

* In the traditional sectors, by revising the conditions for obtaining occupational identity cards and encouraging craftswomen and women designers to start up private training centres and make use of new technologies;

* In the modern sectors, by encouraging women to start up service projects, particularly for family related services, in the fields of tourism, communications and rural transport, as well as in electronics and food processing.

3. The promotion of female entrepreneurship: particular emphasis has been laid on the development of female entrepreneurship, in which connection recommendations have been made to integrate women's projects into regional development programmes, develop service cooperatives, cut administrative procedures, improve the procedures for obtaining credit and produce a guide identifying investment opportunities and the buoyant sectors in investment.

4. Improvement of the institutional framework: in particular, the workshop recommended the introduction of regulations on women's domestic employment, regulation of the home help sector, better protection for women against sexual harassment, the promotion of women through the media as agents of development and encouragement for the appointment of competent women to head institutions responsible for training and employment.

5. The development of studies in order to determine with accuracy the status of women's employment and its future outlook by systematically introducing the gender approach, carrying out periodic studies, strengthening the CREDIF observatory and conducting long-term studies on women's employment, the jobs of the future and the consequences of globalization.

Article 12: Health

> "1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.
>
> "2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation."

Strategy for the promotion of women's health

682. The State regularly allocates almost 6 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) to the health sector, in particular for development of the health infrastructure for preventive care, therapeutic care, research and training.

683. Women's health needs have been placed within the overall framework of primary health care. As a result, women's health has benefited from the necessary attention which has been provided through specific promotion and prevention programmes within the framework of the national health policy.

684. Women's health has therefore been specifically recognized as a fundamental component of the overall health system. Women, who already benefit from national programmes for health promotion and prevention of the typical endemic diseases and of infectious diseases, now have the added benefit of special health care programmes.

685. The adoption of an integrated approach to the health infrastructure has played a determining role in the improvement of women's health. At the present time, 90.6 per cent of basic health centres offer maternal and child health services.

686. In addition, the State's commitment since the early 1990s to the pursuit of a social policy based on seeking to achieve balances in society by means of social benefit payments averaging a rate of over 18 per cent of GDP has unquestionably led to substantial improvement of the social, economic and environmental conditions of groups regarded as vulnerable, and by extension, of health in general.

687. Multisectoral cooperation is one of the keys to the success of the health policy in that it encourages the development of a true multisectoral partnership at the national, regional and local levels (departments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, government organizations and the community).

688. In addition, the programmes to promote primary health care, maternal and child health and family planning are part and parcel of the initiative led by the National Solidarity Fund 26-26 since 1993 to improve living conditions in the economically depressed areas.

I. The infrastructure for maternal and child health and for family planning

This structure is set up as a pyramid consisting of:

1. The peripheral level

689. The base representing the peripheral level comprises district hospitals and basic health centres, 90.6 per cent of which offer integrated maternal and child health services, as well as family planning services. This base represents the first line of recourse to specific services sought by mothers and children, in particular for the care of normal pregnancies and births and for contraceptive advice.

690. In regard to front-line services, primary health care activities were provided in 1,922 basic health centres and in approximately 1,860 focal points at the end of 1998 (the figures amounted to 1,572 in 1991 and to 53 in 1972), representing an accessibility rate of 90 per cent if only the permanent facilities are taken into account and 100 per cent if the mobile services network is also taken into account.

691. In 1998, the national average for basic health centres was 20.5 centres per 100,000 inhabitants. The ratio per inhabitant fell from 5,782 inhabitants for each basic health centre in 1987 to 4,886 inhabitants for each basic health centre in 1998. The ratio is higher in the country's inland regions.

692. The number of basic health centres rose continually throughout the 1990s, registering an increase of over 30 per cent. Tunisia's western regions have benefited the most from the establishment of new centres.

693. In 1998, the front-line facilities also included 105 district hospitals (compared with 99 in 1991).

694. Although not exclusively designed to respond to the specific needs of women, these basic infrastructures offer a wide range of preventive and therapeutic care services for women and offer the potential for conversion into effective integrated centres for promoting the health of the entire family and community.

695. Any analysis of the front-line service infrastructure should take into account the facilities under the National Social Security Fund, comprising six private general hospitals, two of which are in Tunis, one in Bizerte, one in Sousse, one in Sfax and one in Metlaoui, as well as the general medical practices which provide 40 per cent of the overall front-line services.

2. The intermediate level

696. The intermediate level is composed of regional hospitals, of which there is at least one in each governorate administrative centre and of which there are 29 in all. The facilities of a blood bank, a medical laboratory and a surgical block on the one hand and a gynaecology and obstetrics department and a paediatric department on the other allows gynaecologists, midwives and paediatricians to provide care for at-risk pregnancies referred before, at or after the time of birth by facilities operating at the peripheral level.

3. The uppermost level

697. The uppermost level, represented by university hospitals, including 10 general hospitals and 25 specialist institutions, serves as the reference point for the specialized care of high risk pregnancies and newborn infants with illnesses. This level typically provides a full range of sophisticated technical services and full-time specialist nursing care, as well as all the necessary medical testing facilities.

4. Personnel

698. Training for doctors, midwives and health professionals in general has always been a major thrust of Tunisia's health policy. There are now four faculties of medicine, 22 professional health colleges, three higher colleges of health science and technology, a faculty of pharmacy and a faculty of dental surgery.

699. The development of the training infrastructure has led to sustained growth of the number of health professionals and created a supply of qualified personnel for the country's internal regions.

5. Midwives

700. Midwives have always formed the cornerstone for the organization of maternal and child health care. As a result of midwife training, which underwent reform in the mid-1970s when it was introduced as a university subject, their numbers have increased substantially. It is in the inland regions that the ratio of midwives to women of child-bearing age has clearly improved.

701. In 1995, there were 1,459 practising midwives, which is a national ratio of 6.86 per 10,000 women of child-bearing age (15-49 years). In 1998, the number of midwives practising in the peripheral facilities amounted to 1,036, which is a ratio of 2,262 women of child-bearing age per midwife.

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Ratio of midwives per 10,000 women of child-bearing age (15-49 years) by governorate

Governorate	1979	1991	1993	1997
Tunis-Ariana-Ben Arous	5.32	7	7.02	6.04
Zaghouan	1.87	8.7	7.94	9.33
Bizerte	3.5	6.8	7.32	5.90
Bèja	2.81	9.2	7.35	6.08
Jendouba	1.82	8	4.42	4.93
Le Kef	2.51	9.8	7.16	7.57
Siliana	2.16	3.3	8.03	8.98
Kasserine	2.8	6.4	2.89	5.06
Sidi-Bouzid	2.5	8.2	5.55	6.29
Gafsa	4.9	11	7.03	6.47
Tozeur	-	1.2	8.88	7.05
Tataouine	-	4	5.76	5.04
Médenine	3.1	6.3	3.5	4.11
Gabès	3.1	4.6	5.93	6.94
Kébili	-	7.2	3.66	6.86
Sfax	3.9	6.7	6.5	5.82
Kairouan	3.7	6.7	6.7	6.25
Mahdia	3.2	8.3	7.85	8.44
Monastir	5.4	12	10.9	9.26
Sousse	8	11.6	10.7	10.25
Nabeul	4.8	8.2	6.9	5.92
Tunisia as a whole	3.8	6.6	6.8	6.53

Source: Ministry of Health.

6. Doctors

702. The growth in the number of medical facilities has been sustained, particularly since 1977, the year in which the competitive internship

examination was introduced. The number of doctors has enabled needs to be satisfied in most regions, as indicated by the following table. In some regions, however, there is a shortage of specialists, primarily in the governorates of Tozeur, Kébili and Tataouine.

Ratio of doctors per 100,000 inhabitants (1985-1999)

Governorate	1985	1992	1997	1999
Tunis-Ariana-Ben Arous	0.78	8	13.45	14.78
Zaghouan	0.32	3.4	5.7	6.14
Bizerte	0.34	4.4	5.35	5.58
Bèja	0.24	3.3	3.85	3.98
Jendouba	0.21	2.7	3.00	2.92
Le Kef	0.24	3.7	4.15	3.92
Siliana	0.17	1.9	3.67	3.57
Kasserine	0.17	1.9	2.73	2.87
Sidi-Bouzid	0.18	2.3	2.99	2.74
Gafsa	0.26	4.3	4.04	3.95
Tozeur	0.30	4.7	5.42	4.61
Tataouine	0.23	3.8	4.27	4.13
Médenine	0.28	4.1	4.26	4.70
Gabès	0.33	3.8	4.49	4.81
Kébili	0.12	3.9	3.95	3.67
Sfax	0.37	5.6	8.38	8.74
Kairouan	0.20	2.5	3.16	3.44
Mahdia	0.26	3.8	5.12	4.97
Monastir	0.46	6.6	5.57	7.75
Sousse	0.60	8.5	11.21	11.60
Nabeul	0.31	4.7	5.70	6.04
Tunisia as a whole	0.41	5.45	6.99	7.39

Source: Ministry of Health.

703. At the end of 1997, 1,297 general practitioners were working exclusively in the basic health care facilities (79 per cent in basic health centres and 21 per cent in district hospitals) at a ratio of 6,722 inhabitants per general practitioner in the front-line facilities. Nationwide, taking into account private facilities, the ratio is currently one general practitioner per 1,259 inhabitants, compared with 2,300 in 1987.

II. Health promotion, preventive health and health care programmes for women

704. The women's health policy is centred around five main themes of promotion, prevention and care of the various aspects of health of mothers, children and main family members.

705. The policy to promote the health of the family and of mothers and their newborn infants as a pair first developed as part of family planning and the fight against infant mortality and morbidity. It then gradually progressed towards the idea of maternal and child health and on towards the idea of mothers and their newborn infants as a pair. This policy has therefore been part of an overall approach to reproductive health since the early 1990s and revolves around five main themes of health promotion, preventive health and health care for mothers and children.

1. The health of mothers and newborn infants as a pair

706. The health care of mothers and newborn infants as a pair comprises implementation of the following programmes:

- The National Perinatal Programme, which aims to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity and which has developed six components, namely: perinatal monitoring, supervision of delivery, systematic care and intensive care for newborn infants, postnatal monitoring, family planning, maternal lactation and, more recently, premarital consultation (as a means of detecting sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS);

- The Population and Family Health Project, introduced in 1992 to strengthen the National Perinatal Programme, is partially financed by a loan from the World Bank and aims to promote basic health care in general and maternal and child health care in particular, as well as reduce regional and interregional disparities and create a more balanced distribution of resources among the different levels of care;

- The National Programme to Control Maternal Mortality, instituted in March 1999, is part of the national strategy to prevent and control maternal mortality by the year 2001, the aim being to reduce maternal mortality to a ratio of under 50 per 100,000 live births. This programme endeavours to enhance the quality of the health services in regional and university maternity centres, strengthen the training and supervision of staff in maternity centres and improve health coverage and birth control services during pregnancy, delivery and the postnatal period. Primarily, it is based on the implementation of a national plan to monitor maternal mortality in hospitals in order to identify the causes of death.

2. Child health

707. The second theme is related to the progressive consolidation of child health programmes, particularly:

- The expanded programme on immunization;
- The national programme to combat diarrhoeal illnesses;
- The national programme to combat acute respiratory infections;
- The programme to monitor the growth of children aged under six;
- The programme to combat iodine deficiency;
- The programme to combat acute rheumatoid arthritis.

3. The fight against sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS

708. The third theme is related to the programme to combat sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, dating back to 1987 (the first case to appear in Tunisia dates back to 1985), which is based on the prevention of transmission through blood by systematically controlling all blood donation procedures and by providing health education for the public and for the groups at risk in particular. It is also based on an important IEC strategy.

4. Mental health

709. The fourth theme is related to implementation of the National Mental Health Programme, which aims to improve the quality of life for citizens in general and for women in particular. The strategy essentially focuses on increasing the accessibility of care for citizens and on providing health education in order to raise public awareness of the importance of a balanced family, professional and social life.

5. IEC strategies

710. The fifth theme is related to the IEC strategies defined by the National IEC Commission and is based on a number of radio and television programmes, awareness-raising advertisements and the ongoing efforts of the different parties involved in the health sector, particularly non-governmental organizations.

III. Family planning: a determining factor in the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

III.1. Legal foundations

711. The will of the State to ensure the success of its demographic policy found material shape in the Personal Status Code, which reformed marriage and divorce in consistency with women's rights. The ground-breaking strategy of easing restrictions on abortion (1965) constitutes a major factor in laying down the rights of the couple in general and of women in particular.

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III.2. Implementation approaches adapted to the social and economic environment

712. In the interests of balancing demography and development, different yet complementary approaches have been used to implement the family planning policy with the fundamental objective of ensuring the well-being of the family.

713. Tunisia faced a precarious social and economic situation which, during the 1960s, was characterized by a youthful population (50 per cent of whom were under 15 years of age) prone to natural fertility. Moreover, its mediocre natural resources had an estimated growth rate of only 3.5 per cent. With these factors in mind, it therefore turned to a purely demographic approach in order to stem the population growth which posed a major obstacle to all development activity. During the 1970s, economic growth and social development (particularly education) on the one hand and the expansion of the basic infrastructure on the other marked a turning point in the family planning policy. As a result, the efforts in that field are now part of an overall approach of "maternal and child protection".

714. In the early 1980s, Tunisia adopted the policy of basic health care in order to ensure "health for all in the year 2000", as a result of which family planning came to occupy a prime place in the promotion of "family health". In fact, the generally widespread number of basic health centres throughout the country (1,922 in 1988 compared with 1,081 in 1986) made it easier for inhabitants to access health and family planning services. By and large, however, it is the mobile units launched in 1968 which have facilitated access to family planning services for the most underprivileged members of the population. These units have increased to their current number of 105 (85 teams and 20 clinics), covering areas that are poor in infrastructure and/or deprived of human resources (economically depressed areas), the estimated number of which stands at 1,141.

715. Family planning is now synonymous with "family health", a concept which has been widely reinforced since 1995 by the Government's adoption of the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, pursuant to which it has now integrated the different components of reproductive health.

III.3. Specific resources of the National Family and Population Office (ONFP)

716. Since the establishment of the National Family and Population Office (ONFP) in 1994, the national family planning programme has had the benefit of proper resources. It now has 50 specific facilities (Regional Offices and Centres for Education and Family Planning (SCREPF)) in the form of regional clinics specializing in family planning services which provide medical, surgical and educational services. In addition to family planning services, these clinics have been offering reproductive health services since 1995: women's cancer screening, detection of and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, preventive treatment for menopausal symptoms and a diagnostic and advisory service for infertile couples.

717. A total of 105 mobile units, including 20 clinics, serve the more impoverished regions. As a result, 712 economically depressed areas and 88,220

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women of child-bearing age are covered by reproductive health and family planning services.

718. In the facilities of the National Family Planning and Population Office, the services of a total of 38 consultants, 18 general practitioners and 230 higher public health technicians, including 200 midwives, 300 nurses and 330 instructors, are directly mobilized for purposes relating to reproductive health and family planning.

719. ONFP has three centres specializing in reproductive health and family planning; a centre for research on human reproduction and demography, a centre for permanent training and retraining and an audio-visual production centre. The scope of these centres is both national and international.

III.4. Family well-being

720. Since its inception, the Tunisian family planning policy has counted not only on the prevention and/or avoidance of unwanted pregnancy but also on the enjoyment of wanted conception.

721. The promulgation of the law which eased the restrictions on abortion dates back to 1965, at which time the family planning programme was only in the experimental stage. This law permitted medically supervised abortion for women who already had four children. Revised in 1971, it now permits abortion for any woman who requests termination of her pregnancy, regardless of how many children she has. While abortion is undoubtedly a free act, it also has health and social implications, since it aims to reduce maternal mortality on the one hand and to combat infanticide and the abandonment of children on the other.

722. The promulgation of this law, which coincided with the institutionalized management of the national family planning programme and the establishment of ONFP in 1973, was followed by an increasingly substantial demand for voluntary termination of pregnancy. Since the 1980s, however, the number of these terminations has stabilized at approximately 20,000 per year, despite the growing number of women of child-bearing age.

723. Desired conception and the fight against infertility have emerged as objectives of the family planning programme since 1973 or 1974. The shift in the concept of family planning towards maternal and child health, and subsequently family health, mirrors a change in the state of mind of the decision-makers, the service providers and the service users themselves. In addition, advice on infertility has since been introduced in family planning clinics with a view to establishing an initial diagnosis and, where necessary, directing infertile couples towards the specialist services provided by public hospitals. In 1997, 3,615 infertility consultations were recorded in the clinics run by ONFP.

IV. Specific health coverage indicators

724. The inclusion of basic health care for women as part of the national health strategy, together with the development of the health infrastructure, personnel training and the implementation of national programmes, has constituted a basis

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for the determination of women's access to quality services, giving rise to a substantial improvement in all women's health indicators.

725. Immunization coverage now exceeds 90 per cent for the main target diseases, as a result of which neonatal tetanus has been eradicated, as has poliomyelitis, the last case of which dates back to 1992 (malaria, bilharzia, diphtheria and trachoma having already been eradicated).

Prenatal monitoring

726. Under the national perinatal programme, four consultations are offered for each pregnancy. The main objectives of these consultations are first to detect pregnancies at risk, subsequently to prepare women for delivery in suitable conditions and lastly to show them how to care for a newborn baby. Prenatal monitoring has thus undoubtedly improved.

727. The proportion of women receiving prenatal consultations rose from 54 per cent in 1984 to 84.5 per cent in 1997. The level of this indicator is extremely significant, since it is not wholly dependent on the availability of resources and the social and economic resources of the population, but also on the organization of services, as shown by the example of some regions which have managed significantly to improve the proportion of this indicator. In Sidi Bouzid, as a result of the integration of family planning activities and prenatal consultations, the number of first prenatal consultations increased from 49 per cent in 1989 to 69 per cent in 1996.

Assisted delivery

728. Preventive care for pregnant women has helped considerably to boost the number of assisted deliveries. The number of women having had assisted deliveries rose from 30 per cent in 1970 to 72 per cent in 1989 and to 81.6 per cent in 1997.

729. In the regions where this proportion was no higher than 15 per cent in 1979, such as Gafsa in the south, it rose to 70.4 per cent in 1992 and to 80 per cent in 1998.

730. The front-line hospital network, which has seen a marked increase in district hospitals and the number of their maternity beds, has contributed appreciably to improving the coverage of deliveries, particularly in the inland regions. In this type of hospital, maternity services represent 40 per cent of all activities.

Women's health indicators (per cent)

	1994	1997	1999
Prenatal monitoring	79	84.5	-
Assisted delivery	80.3	81.6	86
Postnatal monitoring	23.4	53.2	-
Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births	68.9		-

Source: Ministry of Health.

Demographic indicators

Life expectancy at birth

731. Life expectancy at birth rose from 51.56 years in 1966 to 70.2 years in 1990 and 73.6 years in 1997 for women and from 50.55 years to 67.4 years and 70.2 years for men. At the national level, life expectancy should reach 72.6 years in the year 2000 and 75.1 years in 2015 (77.6 years for women). Women live an average of 2.8 years longer than men.

Child mortality

732. The impact of Tunisia's social and economic growth has resulted in remarkable progress in the fight against child morbidity and mortality.

733. As a result of the improvement in living conditions (housing, nutrition and hygiene) and the establishment of national programmes for women and children, such as those which aim to provide immunization, fight diarrhoeal diseases and enhance prenatal follow-up and delivery conditions, coupled with the fact that Tunisian women have embraced modern medicine, a considerable decline has been registered in Tunisia's child mortality rate, which fell from 150 per cent in 1966 to 120 per cent in 1975 and to 45 per cent in 1990.

734. The adoption in the 1990s of a risk-free maternity approach had the effect of reducing by half the child mortality rate during that decade, falling as it did from 45 per cent in 1990 to 27.2 per cent in 1997. Moreover, it was forecast by the National Institute of Statistics to reach 21.7 per cent in the year 2000.

Female mortality rate

735. The mortality rate among women of child-bearing age (in the 15-49 age group) fell from 1.6 per cent in 1985 to 0.66 per cent in 1993-1994. Death is attributable to illness in 82.5 per cent of cases and to accident in 10.9 per cent of cases. In the case of illness, 23 per cent died of cancer and 18.9 per cent of cardiovascular diseases.

736. The maternal mortality rate stands at 68.9 deaths per 100,000 live births (1993-1994), the main causes of which are:

- Haemorrhage (31.4 per cent);
- Hypertension (19.3 per cent);
- Infection (11.4 per cent);
- Cardiovascular problems (11.4 per cent);
- Other causes (17.9 per cent);
- Unknown (8.6 per cent).

The main risk factors are associated with being above the age of 35 years, living alone and being illiterate.

737. The survey, however, revealed significant disparities between the coastal regions in the east of the country, where the rate stood at 51.6 deaths per 100,000 live births, and the west, where the rate stood at 99.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, as illustrated by the following table:

Maternal mortality rate by region

Region	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births
Greater Tunis	40.0
North-east	50.4
North-west	94.0
Centre east	57.4
Centre west	105.7
South-east	62.7
South-west	92.8
Total	68.9

Source: Ministry of Health.

738. The objective promoted by the Ninth National Development Plan (1997-2001) consisted of reducing the maternal mortality rate at the time of delivery.

739. Maternal deaths are linked to delivery and its after-effects in 69.3 per cent of cases and to pregnancy in 22.1 per cent of cases, with abortion representing 2.1 per cent.

740. The improved fertility rates have helped to lower the maternal mortality rate, as illustrated by the following table:

Maternal mortality and fertility rate

	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	Fertility rate (per cent)
Greater Tunis	40	80.5
North-east	50.4	83.5
North-west	94	80.5
Centre west	105.7	112.5
Centre east	57.5	92.6
South-east	62.4	100.3
South-west		102.5
Tunisia	69	89

Source: ONFP.

Birth control

741. From the outset, this policy has assumed an offensive approach and equipped itself with the means to achieve its objectives: unequivocal legal support has given concrete shape to the State's will to ensure the success of its demographic policy. From being a statutory offence, abortion is now claimed as part and parcel of human rights and of women's freedom in particular. Tunisia is one of the few African countries and the first Muslim country to permit abortion.

742. The results of the demographic policy are evident, although a significant gap remains between the urban and rural settings and there is mention of "pockets of resistance" in the south and centre west.

743. The rate for contraceptive use rose from 49.8 per cent in 1984 to 59.7 per cent in 1994, 61.2 per cent in 1997 and 65.6 per cent in 1998. The total fertility rate index went from 4.64 per cent in 1984 to 3.45 per cent in 1989, 2.9 per cent in 1996 and 2.38 per cent in 1997.

	1984	1994	1997	1998
Total fertility rate index	4.64	2.9	2.38	
Contraceptive use	49.8	59.7	61.2	65.6

Source: ONFP.

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744. The striking change in various maternity-related parameters leads to the inevitable conclusion that a qualitative leap has occurred in the lives of women who have freed themselves from the constraints of uncontrolled fertility in order to experience maternity to a fuller degree, devote themselves more to an active working life and enjoy a better quality of living.

Life cycle of women on the basis of different parameters

Indicators	1966	1994
Age at marriage (years)	20.8	26.7
Life expectancy at birth (years)	51	73.3
Total fertility rate index (children)	7.15	2.9
Age at birth of first child (years)	22	28
Period of life devoted to maternity (years)	24	10
Years devoted to maternal nursing (years)	18	6
Life expectancy at birth of last child (years)	15	35

Source: ONFP.

745. Today, Tunisian women marry and become mothers at an increasingly later age, regardless of their educational attainment and environment:

- The average age of women at marriage went from 19.4 years in 1966 to 22.5 years in 1975 and 27 years in 1994.

- The age at the birth of the first child went from 22 years in 1966 to 28 years in 1994, whereas women between the ages of 25 and 29 gave birth for the first time at the average age of 24 years. In rural areas, the average age for a first birth is currently 22.2 years.

746. As a result of the overall development and family planning policy, the general population will reach about 11.9 million in 2015, the total fertility rate index will stabilize at 2.10 from 2010 and life expectancy at birth will reach 75.1 years in 2015 according to the forecasts of the National Institute of Statistics.

747. Family planning has enabled Tunisian women to renounce the traditional values which confined them to the role of child-bearer. Family planning has had a clear impact on the emancipation of women, while the indicators of their move away from procreation and their investment in working life and non-domestic activities are concrete facts which are evidence of a radical change in attitudes. Young people under 25 years of age, the "children of family planning", have a positive attitude towards contraception (ONFP survey). They

are convinced that birth control is an essential element for the achievement of balance in both individuals and families.

Morbidity indicators

748. According to data produced by the national survey conducted in 1991 among 84,693 in-patients in public hospitals, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases are one of the main causes of hospitalization for both women and men, whereas traumatic injuries and poisoning, which are the third cause of hospitalization for men, are three times less frequent among women.

749. The survey also showed that morbidity is no longer governed by infectious disease. Other health problems inherent to diet, lifestyle and environment are on the increase.

Breast cancer

750. Breast cancers represent 14.1 per cent of all malignant tumours and 27.5 per cent of tumours in women. From the age of 30, breast cancer tops the list: 43 per cent of recorded cancers occur in sexually active women.

751. Despite the improvement in accessibility to the health facilities offered by the family planning services and basic health centres, the diagnostic services for breast cancer, which have been considerably enhanced over a 10-year period, are still often slow.

752. Under the MAFF/UNFT breast screening programme launched in 1995 and run by Alliance of Women in the Medical Professions attached to UNFT, women may have a mammogram, free of charge, at the Charles Nicolle hospital in Tunis. Purchased with donations, the mammography equipment is intended to provide early breast screening. Over 5,000 women have already been screened, with a detection rate of 5 per cent. This project benefits from an annual subsidy from MAFF.

Cancer of the cervix

753. A study of 1,637 cases of cancer of the cervix diagnosed at the Tunis Institute of Carcinology between 1969 and 1989 found that:

- The incidence of cancer is stable and the proportion of young women under 35 years of age with this disease remains constant;
- Two out of three women fail to consult a doctor until over six months after the appearance of the first symptom, meaning that the cancer is at an advanced stage when diagnosed;
- In the case of such disease, screening is technically possible and cancer discovered at a subclinical stage has an excellent prognosis. Unfortunately, cancer in situ or at the stage where there are still no symptoms represents only 0.8 per cent of cases.

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Sexually transmitted diseases/AIDS

754. In Tunisia, the first case of infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (the virus responsible for AIDS) was declared in December 1985. Since then, the average incidence is estimated at 50 cases annually. At the end of 1998, the Minister of Public Health recorded 844 cases of infection with HIV, 497 of which were AIDS cases, including 306 which had already proved fatal. A total of 183 were women infected with HIV/AIDS.

755. In 1997, the prevalence of HIV in the general population was estimated at 5 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The breakdown by sex shows that cases are more prevalent among men than women, with males representing 72 per cent of the total number of infected individuals compared with 28 per cent for women. According to the compulsory notifications of HIV infection, the incidence among pregnant women between the ages of 15 and 24 is nil. The results of the survey of pregnant women by sentinel site, conducted in 1992-1993 in the regions of Tunis, Sousse and Sfax, showed no cases.

756. Sexually transmitted diseases are the subject of a strategy under way with a view to adopting a more effective approach to the problem and further refining the specific epidemiological situation by caring for cases on the basis of a syndromic approach.

757. A national prevention programme to combat sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS and provide care for sufferers is now being implemented. Targeted at all population groups, particularly young people, it is carried out in partnership between public health facilities and non-governmental organizations working in the field of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS.

758. As for the risk factors in the spread of the disease, whereas contamination through blood and its by-products has been the main trigger for the disease, exposure to the risk of infection through heterosexual activity is becoming increasingly significant (30 per cent), while the risk of mother-to-child transmission is still relatively small, standing at no higher than 4 per cent.

759. As for prostitution, two HIV positive cases have been notified from among the regular prostitutes who have the benefit of periodic check-ups. On the other hand, it remains difficult to gain access to the world of clandestine prostitution, where non-governmental organizations are endeavouring to create an impact.

Malnutrition and obesity

760. Malnutrition does not appear to affect girls any more than boys. The national survey to assess the nutritional state of the Tunisian population, conducted by the National Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology (INNTA), which found that 1.3 per cent of the child population under the age of 72 months suffered from emaciation (weight/height), records no statistically significant difference between the two sexes.

761. Conversely, obesity is more likely to affect girls, among whom the rate between the ages of 6 and 11 months stands at 19.4 per cent compared with a rate

of 9.4 per cent among boys in the same age group. Retarded growth in height affects 9.5 per cent of unweaned infants and young children of all ages and sexes, without any significant statistical difference between the sexes. The same is true of low weight, the incidence of which stands at 4.4 per cent.

Incidence of malnutrition (per cent)

Stage	Male sex	Female sex
Acute mild malnutrition	16	14
Acute moderate and severe malnutrition	3.8	2.3
Chronic mild malnutrition	26.5	26.5
Chronic moderate and severe malnutrition	17.3	19.2
Mild overfeeding	9.7	10.3
Moderate and severe overfeeding	3.1	4.4

Source: Minister of Health.

Deficiency diseases

762. On the other hand, hospital surveys and surveys of pregnant women attending for check-ups show that anaemic deficiency is common among Tunisian women, affecting one woman in every three.

Mental health

763. The proportion of men suffering from psychological illnesses and attending hospitals and emergency department is generally higher than among women. Of the women admitted to hospital, 48 per cent are married and aged between 20 and 40, whereas the men admitted are mainly unmarried.

764. A national mental health programme is being implemented within the context of promoting the mental well-being of Tunisians, including women.

765. Together with education, public health is the sector containing the highest number of women in the Tunisian economy, their numbers having increased from 46 per cent in 1992 to 48 per cent in 1997 in all medical and paramedical positions alike.

766. Women account for 37.9 per cent of doctors, 61.6 per cent of dental surgeons, 70 per cent of pharmacists and 53.2 per cent of paramedics.

767. This remarkable progress in specialist areas of medicine which require proper scientific training is not, however, accompanied by a similar increase in

access to decision-making positions, where the proportion of women is still relatively modest.

768. It should be noted, however, that:

- A woman has held the post of Minister of Public Health;
- A Tunisian woman doctor is currently an advisor to WHO;
- ONFP is run by a woman doctor (director-general);
- The National Children's Centre is run by a woman doctor;
- Two women are official representatives of the Minister of Public Health.

769. Women doctors are also extremely active in non-governmental organizations working in the field of medicine, in particular:

- The Tunisian Family Planning Association (ATFP);
- The Tunisian Association to Combat Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS;
- Positive Action for Women's Health.

Conclusions and prospects

770. The State has made considerable efforts to ensure access to basic health care and to maternal and reproductive health care. An analysis of the health indicators for women shows that Tunisia has made remarkable progress in offering services to cater for women's health needs and improve their health.

771. Attention is devoted to the health of women at various stages of their lives, which is a priority of Tunisia's health policy. None the less, persistent gaps remain in some areas between the means employed and the results recorded. The control of maternal mortality and the profitability of the system would gain from strengthening. Launched in 1991, the new national plan to monitor maternal mortality undoubtedly helped to remedy the situation.

772. The Ninth Development Plan (1997-2001) rightly emphasized the need for better supervision of women's health in particular, including mental health, by stepping up prevention.

Article 13: Social and economic advantages

> "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality with men and women, the same rights, in particular:
>
> "(a) The right to family benefits;
>
> "(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;
>
> "(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life."

773. One of the characteristics of Tunisia's social and economic progress during the 1990s is illustrated by the social calm achieved with the help of social benefits (averaging 18 per cent of GDP) and the mobilization of national solidarity, which, as part of a preventive approach to combating exclusion, enabled the financing of social support programmes to alleviate the consequences of structural adjustment.

774. The reforms of economic liberalization were carried out within the framework of a global approach to human rights. This approach takes into account complementarity and the correlation between the imperatives of economic growth and the concern for social development, which is vital to avoiding the threats of marginalization and imbalance between regions and between social groups and also guarantees a fair share of the benefits of growth.

775. In this context, women have benefited from particular attention, the aim of which is to improve their living conditions, develop their abilities and ensure their full integration into the dynamics of the national economy on the basis of combating sex discrimination.

I. Access to social and family benefits

I.1. Family allowances

776. Measures encouraging greater access for women to social benefits have been adopted within the framework of promoting the family policy and adopting the national plan of action for the family. These measures entail the following:

- In both public and private sectors, the automatic award of family benefits to mothers with custody of children in order to safeguard mothers and their children from the risks of impoverishment and ensuring that those who are eligible receive the benefits to which they are entitled (Act No. 96-65 of 22 July 1996 amending articles 53, 54 and 55 of Act No. 60-30 of 14 December 1960 concerning the organization of the social security systems).

* In both public and private sectors, unification of the criteria for awarding family benefits in regard to the age of child beneficiaries by raising that age to 21 years for children who continue to pursue their education (Act No. 96-65 of 22 July 1996).

* In the public sector, following the lead of the private sector, award of the widow's allowance to the surviving spouse in order to promote the principle of social justice and reciprocity between spouses and preserve the standard of family life (Act No. 96-66 of 22 July 1996 amending Act No. 81-06 of 12 February 1981).

* In the public sector, following the lead of the private sector, the right of the father and mother simultaneously to benefit from family allowances and the temporary benefit for orphans in order to preserve the standard of family life (Act No. 96-67 of 22 July 1996 amending article 48 of Act No. 85-12 of 5 March 1985).

777. These measures respond to the same concern to strengthen opportunities for the achievement of stability and balance within the family, while strengthening the principles of reciprocity and social justice between spouses in order to safeguard their respective rights and the rights of children.

778. In addition, the care infrastructure in the preschool and extracurricular sector has been strengthened in recent years as a result of new legislative and institutional incentives (cf. art. 11), in particular Act No. 94-88 of 26 July 1994, which determines the means by which the National Social Security Fund may help to finance day-care centres by contributing towards the cost of care for children whose mothers work outside the home.

I.2. Social advancement and welfare programmes

779. The national programme for social welfare and integration is part of a preventive strategy aimed at lessening the social problems stemming from social changes by strengthening the family unit and its stability, with the help of suitable efforts on the part of seven social welfare and integration centres in the areas of Ariana, Tunis, Sfax, Kairouan, Gafsa, Nabeul and Kasserine, as well as the following institutions:

- The centre for the observation of minors in Manouba;
- The national centre for social supervision and guidance in Douar Hicher;
- The national child welfare institute;
- The social advancement divisions located throughout the Republic.

780. The national centre for social supervision and guidance, for example, cares for homeless people who lack family support with a view to achieving their reintegration. During the period 1997-1998, it handled 586 cases, 246 of which involved children, 22 adults and 120 older persons. Women accounted for 73 per cent of the adults and female children accounted for a proportion of

16 per cent. A total of 469 people were integrated by means of the following methods:

- Integration into the family of origin:	197
- Integration into the extended family:	31
- Integration into foster families:	15
- Provision of help in constituting a family:	115
- Placement in the centre for the aged:	82
- Integration outside the family structure:	29

I.3. The maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund (cf. para. 123 et seq.)

I.4. Dealing with marital disputes and situations of divorce

781. As part of their field work and in conjunction with the legal authorities, the divisions for social advancement located throughout the country provide care services for families in difficulty in order to help with relationship problems linked to marital disputes and arising from situations of divorce or child neglect.

782. In the context of their efforts to prevent delinquency, the social welfare and integration centres take steps to improve the family environment and intrafamily relations, particularly where young people at risk of delinquency are involved. These efforts are generally carried out in conjunction with the legal authorities. It was within the framework that, in 1997, a total of 111 social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs, in association with family magistrates and the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs, benefited from three training courses on the subject of dealing with marital disputes.

783. In 1998, a total of 12,598 families in difficulty were placed under supervision (with a solution found in 8,100 cases). The nature of their difficulty was broken down as follows:

Marital disputes:	3,998 cases
Situations of divorce:	1,113 cases
Relationship problems:	2,683 cases
Child neglect:	1,126 cases
Miscellaneous situations:	3,678 cases

784. During the period 1997-1998, the welfare and integration centres dealt with 925 cases, 390 of them involving conciliation and advice.

I.5. Programmes to assist and protect older persons within the environment of the family

785. Act No. 94-114 of 31 October 1994 concerning the welfare of older persons was promulgated, defining:

1. The principles on which such welfare was founded with a view to preserving the health, dignity and rights of older persons and facilitating their family and social integration, as well as their effective

participation in all spheres of social and cultural life, sports and leisure;

2. The methods of caring for older persons within their families and in welfare establishments;

3. Protective measures for older persons in need.

786. In addition to helping the most deprived, the objective of the programme to assist older persons within the family is to strengthen the social fabric and achieve a model society in which the different generations are united. Within the framework of the social and health benefits provided in the home, a network of mobile teams consisting of doctors, social workers and nurses has been created throughout the country.

787. Moreover, in order to ensure that older persons continue to live at home, a family placement system for older persons in need has been introduced. The host families may be eligible for monthly benefits to cover the costs of such care.

788. Older persons without support benefit from special assistance in appropriate centres which offer them a variety of services: health care, psychological and social supervision, food, clothing and so on.

789. There are now 11 centres accommodating 720 older persons, including 264 women, which is 36.6 per cent of the total number. These centres, which operate on a State subsidy, are all run by organizations.

II. Access to assistance and anti-poverty programmes

790. As a result of economic growth and a support strategy offering help and social solidarity to the most vulnerable groups, poverty is constantly declining in Tunisia. The national survey on household consumption, which is regularly conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, revealed that the poverty threshold fell considerably between 1990 and 1995 from 7.2 per cent to 6.2 per cent.

II.1. National Programme of Aid to Needy Families (PNAFN)

791. In regard to benefiting from permanent aid, the National Programme of Aid to Needy Families (PNAFN) gives priority to single parent families headed by a woman with minor children in her care. The number of such families represents 51 per cent of all beneficiaries (57,680 families).

792. This programme has grown considerably, both in terms of the aid provided, which increased from 87 dinars per family in 1987 to 404 dinars in 1998, and in terms of the number of beneficiaries, which rose from 73,000 in 1987 to 112,500 in 1998. This growth is due to the continuing increase in aid following the basic price reviews on the one hand and the wish to target needy inhabitants more effectively on the other.

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PNAFN benefits for vulnerable families 1992-1998

Year	Number of beneficiaries	Annual amount of aid per family	Annual credit in dinars
1994	101 000	310	31 310 000
1995	101 000	310	31 310 000
1996	105 000	340	32 980 000
1997	105 000	372	37 170 000
1998	112 500	404	42 454 000

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs.

Occasional aid

793. Various types of occasional aid are granted to individuals or families on religious feast occasions, at the start of the school year or at odd times of difficulty. The following table shows the overall number of beneficiaries and the amount of aid provided during the period 1994-1998:

Type of aid	Number of beneficiaries	Amount in dinars
At the start of the school year	1 484 516	32 728 309
On religious feast occasions	1 698 924	42 443 705
Exceptional aid	299 505	7 191 386
Total	3 482 945	82 353 400

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs.

II.2. Aid programmes for older and disabled persons in need

794. Older and disabled persons in need benefit from special aid provided on a quarterly basis. The following table shows that amount of this aid and the number of beneficiaries for the period 1994-1998:

Group	Number	Annual amount per person	Total credit in dinars
Disabled persons	2 831	404 (1)	4 531 312
Aged persons	3 100	404 (2)	5 073 000
Total	5 931	-	9 604 312

(1) The amount increased from 310 dinars in 1994 to the current amount of 404 dinars.

(2) The amount increased from 280 dinars in 1994 to the current amount of 404 dinars.

II.3. Social development programmes

795. Two income-generating programmes have been established for disabled persons and low-income families with productive capabilities in the fields of agriculture, small trades, handicrafts and services. The aims of these programmes are to:

- Strengthen employment and reduce unemployment among disabled persons;
- Ensure that development programmes are better targeted in order to create stable incomes for needy families, build their initiative and integrate them into the economic circuit.

796. During the 1994-1998 period, projects were created for the benefit of 386 needy families capable of work, together with 3,688 projects for disabled persons.

797. Within the framework of development programmes, the number of women has risen to:

- 603 beneficiaries of income-generating projects for disabled persons, representing 16.35 per cent of the total number;
- 295 beneficiaries of projects for needy families, representing 76.7 per cent of the total number.

II.4. The National Solidarity Fund 26-26

798. Created in 1993 on the initiative of the President of the Republic, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the National Solidarity Fund runs on an allocation from the State budget, voluntary contributions from citizens and entreprises and contributions from friendly and brother countries.

799. The National Solidarity Fund 26-26 finances basic infrastructure projects (drinking water, electricity, tracks and roads, housing, schools and health centres) and microprojects (agriculture, handicrafts and small trades) in areas where there is no basic infrastructure and where the economic potential is poor or non-existent.

800. In 1996, the National Solidarity Fund launched a programme for the establishment of income-generating projects. Rural women have benefited directly from handicraft projects (26 per cent of projects) and indirectly through approved agricultural projects (68 per cent of all projects) which benefit rural families.

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III. Access to integrated development programmes

801. Women have benefited from the development and employment assistance programmes introduced by the State and constantly readapted in order to respond more effectively to the needs of inhabitants and improve their living conditions. Whether they aim to develop the basic social and economic infrastructure, create jobs, generate income or promote microenterprises and self-employment, these programmes have directly or indirectly benefited women from the underprivileged classes in urban and rural areas and have furthered their integration into the economic circuit.

802. Within the framework of the national integrated programmes, whether the Integrated Rural Development Programme (PDRI) or the Integrated Urban Development Programme (PDUI), new projects are implemented which specifically target women with certain vocational qualifications. The aim of such efforts is to develop productive home-based activities and the economics of the family in such a way as to encourage the creation of women's microenterprises.

803. The surveys conducted in the urban fringe districts included in the Integrated Urban Development Programme showed the decisive contribution of women to boosting the family income.

804. Begun in 1987, the Regional Development Programme (PRD), which is an amalgam of various development programmes, had benefited 12,000 women by 1992, representing 10 per cent of the beneficiaries under the heading of "assistance to handicrafts".

- Begun in 1984 and relaunched in 1993, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (PDRI) has incorporated a women's component in its new generation of projects, such as the development project for the north-west, which comprises specific planning for women's agricultural, handicraft or domestic projects as a whole, with access to credit, vocational training and agricultural extension services.

- Set in motion in 1994, the Integrated Urban Development Programme, which is intended to support income generation in underprivileged districts, has helped approximately 9,200 young women to gain access to a stable source of income. A plan of action to promote women's productive activities in major urban fringe districts was started as part of this programme in 1996.

IV. Access to bank loans and other forms of finance

805. Article 24 of the Personal Status Code prescribes the right of married women to dispose freely of their assets. Married women are also fully free to enter into credit agreements with finance institutions and banks. Women have always invested in microenterprises through the non-organized sector. However, it is only in connection with programmes implemented within the framework of structural adjustment that they have been able to profit from the investment opportunities offered by the new finance mechanisms.

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806. Within the framework of the Fund for Industrial Promotion and Development (FOPRODI), women received licences from the Ministry of Industry to create projects (not exceeding 3 million dinars and benefiting from preferential interest rates) in various sectors, with a leaning towards textiles and leather, being the sectors which attract the greatest number of women project designers. Productive women, however, are involved in only 5 per cent of the total number of projects implemented.

807. Only limited numbers of women have benefited from the opportunities to create projects offered by institutions such as FOPRODI, FONAPRA (respectively 5 per cent and 14 per cent of the total of their respective undertakings) and APIA (3.3 per cent).

808. The impossible task of providing guarantees which satisfy the requirements of the banks managing these funds and the lack of qualifications to develop projects eligible for bank loans prevent women from having greater recourse to these Funds.

IV.1. The microenterprise programme of the Tunisian Employment Agency (ATE)

809. Experience has furthermore shown that women are more attracted to small productive investments, as demonstrated by the programme to develop microenterprises carried out as part of the reform of vocational training and employment and run by the Tunisian Employment Agency (ATE).

810. The women in question have benefited from help with information and guidance in building up their technical portfolios and gaining access to finance. The proportion of women beneficiaries increased from 18 per cent in 1993 to 30.5 per cent in 1997, as indicated by the following table. The breakdown of productive women by sector indicates a preference for textiles, the food industries, leather, footwear and woodwork.

Development of female microenterprise

Sex	Beneficiaries	Financed investment projects	Jobs created	Jobs created (per cent)	Unit cost
Women	426	1 648 178	889	1.97	2 296
Men	970	4 395 004	1 914	2.08	1 854
Total	1 396	1 648 178	2 803	4.329	2 155
Percentage of women beneficiaries	30.51				

Source: Tunisian Employment Agency, November 1997.

811. Since 1996, several experiments have been attempted, although without great success, to encourage women's access to sources of finance, such as the establishment of a special credit line for women's projects at the National Agricultural Bank (BNA), with support from the World Bank.

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IV.2. The Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS)

812. Capitalizing on previous experiments, the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS), established in December 1997, strengthened the State's efforts to create income-generating projects for inhabitants who are unable to fulfil the usual conditions for access to bank credit, a considerable proportion of whom consist of women working at home.

813. BTS, a microcredit bank (500 to 30,000 Tunisian dinars), has established its own criteria for granting credit that are based on the responsibility and competence of the entrepreneur and the feasibility of the project. The elimination of guarantees has removed one of the main obstacles to women's access to credit and has opened up new prospects for their economic integration.

814. Since the establishment of the finance bank, women have benefited from 26.4 per cent of projects, amounting to 3,850 projects out of a total of 14,609.

815. Young women between the ages of 24 and 29 have benefited the most from the finance offered by BTS (47.4 per cent). The textile and clothing sectors attract 36 per cent of microprojects created by women, hairdressing and beauty attract 24 per cent and the services sector attracts 11.7 per cent, while other sectors such as computing and office work attract only 6.5 per cent and handicrafts only 5.5 per cent.

Breakdown of women beneficiaries by sector in 1997

Sector	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	67	5.0
Handicrafts	73	5.5
Textiles and dressmaking	485	36.2
Construction	4	0.3
Wood and furniture	1	0.1
Car mechanics	3	0.2
Electricity and electronics	1	0.1
Leather and footwear	15	1.1
Computing and office	87	6.5
Graphic art	4	0.3
Hairdressing and beauty	321	24.0
Medical and paramedical services	11	0.8
Services	156	11.7
Commerce	57	4.3
Other	43	3.2
Total	1 338	100.0

Source: BTS.

IV.3. The new microcredit system of finance

816. In order to further refine the finance system and strengthen the mechanisms of national solidarity, in June 1999, a new microcredit system was established that targets low-income groups and needy families who are capable of performing an economic activity in the fields of agriculture or services.

817. The new system of microcredit may also finance activities which are likely to improve the living conditions of the target groups, such as help with housing maintenance, health costs and other needs.

818. Non-governmental organizations, who partner the State in managing and granting credits to those interested, benefit from a low-interest credit facility with BTS. In this context, BTS has signed partnership agreements with non-governmental organizations, notably UNFT.

V. MAFF support mechanisms

V.1. Technical and financial support for women's microenterprises

819. As part of the national plan of action for the family, the implementation of which began in April 1996, and the strategy for women under the Ninth National Development Plan (1997-2001), MAFF proceeded to establish a mechanism that would provide technical and financial support to women's microenterprises with a view to accompanying and supporting initiatives started by poor women in the informal sector.

820. This mechanism will ensure institutional support for non-governmental organizations, which have been retained within the framework of its activities and have the task of supervising, following up and ultimately training beneficiaries. It will play the role of interface between non-governmental organizations and the Tunisian Solidarity Bank, which is the main provider of credit.

821. The mechanism began operation on 8 March 1999 on the occasion of International Women's Day with the signature of a partnership agreement with BTS and five further agreements with non-governmental organizations, namely UNFT, UTSS, the Tunisian Social Solidarity Federation (FTSS), ENDA and ASAD.

822. There are three levels to the mechanism's operational framework:

- Strategic planning and overall management is the responsibility of the mechanism's steering committee, which is supported by a MAFF management unit;

- The supervision and training of executives in non-governmental organizations which are active as intermediary partners involved in carrying out microcredit-related activities, as well as development of the capacities of the target clientele through training, follow-up and supervision (activities performed by non-governmental organizations).

- Financial support for projects within the framework of agreements with the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS) and the mobilization of various additional resources within the framework of international cooperation.

V.2. The productive women's forum

823. Since 1998, MAFF has organized a productive women's forum on the annual occasion of International Women's Day (8 March), in association with the World Bank. The forum extends over one week and comprises four essential components:

* A fair selling handicrafts that is open to all craftswomen from every region in the country, particularly those living in remote rural areas who have little access to the market circuits;

* A virtual market on the internet (www.elsouk.com) for the best items produced by Tunisian craftswomen, which was launched at the end of 1998 with support from the World Bank (Institute for Economic Development (IDE)) and which was scheduled to be up and running at the end of 1999;

* A training module for craftswomen on the subject of setting up and managing microprojects;

* Training for ministerial executives and personnel from non-governmental organizations in the participatory development approach.

824. Since 1995, MAFF has been engaged in mobilizing financial resources within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation for non-governmental organizations which target women, the aim being to finance projects promoting female microenterprise.

VI. Access to home loans

825. Following the measures adopted by the Government on 5 April 1996 within the framework of the national plan of action for the family, a woman and her spouse may now each enter into an individual loan agreement with social security funds or the Housing Bank in order to build or purchase a joint home (circular of the Minister of Social Affairs to the social security funds dated 9 May 1996).

826. In accordance with Act No. 98/97 of 9 November 1998, spouses who so wish may choose to follow the system of either joint or separate estates with respect to property acquired after their marriage. This choice must be stated in the marriage contract, since the regime of the joint estate is optional. If it is not mentioned in the marriage contract, the regime of the separate estate is applied, as stipulated in article 7.

827. A measure to reduce the interest rate on home loans was adopted in August 1998, thus strengthening the voluntarist nature of Tunisia's housing policy and helping to reduce the cost of purchasing a family home.

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828. The housing stock, which stood in the region of 1,078,000 homes in 1994, rose to 2,204,000 in 1998, representing an additional 67,000 homes annually. Accordingly, 78.3 per cent of Tunisians are now homeowners. At the same time, sustained efforts to eradicate rudimentary housing led to a fall in the proportion of such housing from 44 per cent in 1976 to just 1.2 per cent in 1998.

VII. Access to the Youth Information Office

829. On 29 April 1995, a youth information office was established with a view to devoting close attention to the concerns of young people.

830. This office, which is part of the Ministry of Youth and Childhood, is responsible for gathering data on the services offered by the sectors of main interest to young people. It also has the task of processing such data and placing it at the disposal of all young people, without distinction as to age or sex.

831. In order to provide young people with information and guidance, the Youth Information Office uses:

- Modern communication and information equipment (computers, Minitel, the administrative information and communication system (SICAD), audio-visual methods, a telephone helpline and so on);

- A screen connected to a multimedia station for the transmission of all types of announcements or official statements intended for young people;

- Display cases for posting job offers, notices of competitions and programmes for sports and cultural activities;

- Staffed telephone lines to take calls from young people between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. daily.

832. In addition to the specialist staff from the Ministry of Youth and Childhood, who are knowledgeable in a variety of disciplines, the Youth Information Office is also staffed by representatives from the fields of vocational training and employment, social affairs, higher education and transport. Information about services in other unrepresented sectors and areas can equally be provided.

VIII. Women's participation in cultural and leisure activities

833. One of the most significant aspects of the development of women's rights during the 1990s was the unprecedented abundance of creative works produced by women in fields ranging from the visual arts to the theatre, cinema and writing.

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834. The cultural sector, a privileged sphere of creation and creativity, therefore witnessed the emergence of several young female personalities and less young women novelists, poets, film-makers, visual artists, archaeologists and so on, who had an evident impact on the different areas of artistic creation and thus gave new impetus to the country's cultural life.

835. The Cultural Award of Merit has been bestowed on 20 women.

VIII.1. Books and public libraries

836. Between 1956, the date of independence, and today, women have produced 193 literary titles, 143 of which were published during the decade 1987-1998 and 106 of which were published between 1992 and 1997. In other words, 74 per cent of the literary output of Tunisian women was produced during those last five years.

837. As part of the national policy to promote creativity, the State acquired 102 of these titles during the decade 1987-1997.

838. The public library sector is distinguished by the sustained presence of women in both urban and rural areas. The offices, services and sections of the public library department are run by women with different levels of responsibility. The public library network has a staff of 967, including 429 women. Within the network, 142 women are in active charge of several public libraries, including 11 regional libraries which are part of a pilot scheme to revitalize cultural activity and encourage reading. A further 90 women are heads of section, including children's sections. The reading department has a staff of 39, including seven chief officers, four of whom are women. The decade 1987-1997 was particularly remarkable for the establishment of the presidential "Multimedia Library" project under the watchful eye of a team of women supported by the Ministry of Culture.

VIII.2. Music and dance

839. Women hold a privileged position in the world of music by virtue of their initial training, performance, responsibility and distinction.

840. During the decade 1987-1998, initial music training clearly developed, as demonstrated by the fact that 12 women students at the Higher Institute of Music and 84 others obtained the Arab music diploma. The successful candidates helped to strengthen the body of teachers in specialist establishments and in national education.

841. The number of women in the field of professional and amateur music and dance has increased. The decade of 1987-1997 was notable for the establishment of several women's troupes, some of which won awards for the quality of their musical research and commitment. Between 20 and 50 per cent of the members of local and regional music and dance troupes, both public and private, are women.

842. There are two women in management positions in the music and dance sector.

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VIII.3. Theatre

843. The number of women in the world of theatre is constantly rising. There are women attending the Institute of Dramatic Art, which, in addition to artistic training, offers teacher training for women in the dramatic arts.

844. During the decade of 1987-1997, 35 women obtained professional identity cards in dramatic art, which is 20.3 per cent of the total number of 172 cards which were issued. Moreover, 20 per cent of theatre companies are run by women.

Women in the world of theatre

Years	Women directors	Women scenarists	Actresses
1987	3	2	72
1988	4	3	97
1989	6	4	53
1990	2	2	82
1991	5	5	115
1992	4	2	122
1993	2	4	143
1994	3	1	169
1995	5	5	155
1996	6	5	202
Total	39	33	1 290

The number of cards does not reflect the number of actresses.

Source: Ministry of Culture.

VIII.4. Cinema

845. Women are active in the field of cinema as actresses, producers, directors and screenplay writers, as well as in every occupation in the film-making industry. During the decade of 1987-1997, remarkable progress was recorded in the field of women's film productions; six feature-length films and 14 shorts were produced by women. There are also women involved in film production and at the head of production companies.

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846. Some women screenplay writers have received national and international awards in recognition of their talent, including Moufida Tlatli, who won the prize of the International Cinema and Art Confederation for her film Les Silences du Palais, as well as a special mention from the Camera d'Or jury at the Cannes Film Festival (1994) and the Tanit d'Or of the Carthage Film-making Days (JCC) (1994).

VIII.5. Fine arts

847. The fine arts sector has seen the greatest progress as a result of the cultural investment made by women and the increase in the number of women artists. In regard to training, 12 women artists benefited from residential art courses between 1992 and 1997.

848. The number of exhibitions organized by women is constantly increasing at both the national and international levels. MAFF has established the tradition of organizing an annual exhibition of women painters on the occasion of International Women's Day. All these events are well publicized on the radio and television.

849. One indicator of the boom in the production of fine art works by women is the increase in the number of women who run galleries, an area which, until the beginning of the 1990s, was exclusively confined to men.

VIII.6. Cultural activities

850. The various measures adopted in favour of women helped to energize their presence on the cultural scene and to open up before them the world of cultural activities with a view to promoting their works of creation and enabling them to make a contribution to culture. The number of women organizing cultural activities thus rose from 5 in 1987 to 15 in 1992 and 41 in 1997, while the number of women's events increased from 31 in 1992 to 109 in 1997.

851. International cooperation agreements have been used to advantage to enable different women artists and cultural administrators to receive better training and an introduction to a new method of creation and management. Between 1992 and 1997, 59 women benefited from training (training and study grants), as well as from training and retraining courses held in Tunisian institutions.

852. In regard to the protection of copyright, the number of women affiliated with the Tunisian Organization for the Protection of Copyright stands at 72 out of a total of 1,243 affiliated members. Limited to 29 in 1997, their number rose to 42 during the decade 1987-1997, representing an increase of 144 per cent in comparison with 1987. Affiliated membership, however, is free.

853. Women's access to culture has constituted one of the characteristic features of the national landscape over the past five years, as also illustrated by the emergence of women's cultural clubs, such as the Faouzia Kallel Cultural Club in Nabeul and the Majida Boulila Club in Sfax. These clubs fan the activity pursued in the capital by the prestigious Tahar Haddad Cultural Club, which is run by a woman, to the regions.

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854. Tunisia's membership of the World Trade Organization and its signature of the Association Agreement with the European Union requiring an overall raising of standards through the application of efficiency criteria and quality guidelines have both helped to strengthen the components for the establishment and protection of copyright and investments in the cultural world.

VIII.7. Access to leisure

855. A survey of the cultural practices of Tunisians, carried out in 1989/90 by the Centre for Cultural Development Studies and Documentation, showed that women participate in the various forms of leisure developing in the public domain, although at different levels than men.

856. The family survey (a representative sample of 1,025 families) conducted by MAFF in 1993 also showed that 43.2 per cent of Tunisian families share the same leisure activities: 38.2 per cent go to the beach, 25.7 per cent visit the country's tourist attractions, 19.2 per cent make use of the public parks and 16 per cent go on suburban outings.

857. Within the framework of the pro-family measures of 5 April 1996, the public and local authorities were recommended to encourage families to visit tourist attractions and to create family leisure and entertainment areas. In this context, it was decided that:

* The Tunisian Hotel Trade Federation should reduce hotel rates by 30 per cent for Tunisian families;

* Sites should be planned to house centres offering leisure, recreational activities and services for the enjoyment of families.

858. Children's clubs are social and educational institutions which operate outside school hours and cater for children of both sexes between the ages of 6 and 14. These institutions offer a variety of activities for children with a view to developing their psychomotor, social, emotional and mental abilities. Girls and boys alike benefit from the activities offered by these clubs, which increased in number from 28,829 to 38,035 between 1992 and 1997.

859. National festivals are periodically organized in different regions of the country which encourage both girls and boys to participate and develop their talents in a variety of activities (theatre, music, literature and so on).

IX. Female sport

IX.1. Measures to encourage female sport

860. Various measures have been adopted by the public authorities to enable female sport to realize its potential by providing all the necessary financial and human resources for that purpose.

861. To that end, the efforts of the public authorities have focused on encouraging the establishment of clubs which specialize in female sport. In addition, these clubs, as well as the women's sections of multisports associations, have benefited from subsidies.

862. The incentive measures also applied to the female practice of sport in schools in the interests of expanding the base of the pyramid of female sports practitioners.

863. It should further be noted that, as part of the policy of encouraging female sport, a female sports committee was established in 1997. The work of this committee, in which the concerned sports federations take part under the supervision of the General Sports Commission, culminated in the development of a plan of action for the promotion of female sport, which aims in particular to:

- Provide real help for clubs specializing in female sport and for female sections of multisports associations by supplying the necessary sports equipment;

- Exempt clubs and associations from the payment of membership subscriptions to sports federations and the cost of permits (a note dated 27 December 1997 was addressed by the General Sports Commission to the national sports federations with a view to application of this measure);

- Enable these clubs and associations to benefit from the necessary training by assigning the task of coaching to physical education instructors in conjunction with the physical education department;

- Adopt the principle of concentrating the sports infrastructure next to primary and secondary education establishments, which are the main source of athletes in the field of civil sport;

- Raise the awareness of the media so that they fully perform their role in promoting female sport.

IX.2. The status of female sport

864. There are now 28 sports associations specializing in female sport, whereas, prior to 1987, there were no more than five. As a result, the number of young women holding civil sport permits increased from 7,488 during the 1993/94 sports season to 8,346 during the 1996/97 sports season, notwithstanding the fall registered in the total number of sports associations with female sections.

865. In addition, as a result of these efforts, the proportion of young girls with sports permits has been maintained at 12.2 per cent of the total number of permit-holders.

Statistical data relating to female sport

Sports season	1993/94	1996/97
Number of clubs specializing in female sport	17	28
Number of sports associations with a female sports section	171	164
Number of young women permit-holders	7 488	8 346
Number of permit-holders (men)	53 619	59 902
Percentage of women among the total number of permit-holders	12.22	12.25

Source: Ministry of Youth and Childhood.

866. Between 1992 and 1997, the proportion of women physical education instructors rose appreciably from 19 per cent to 22.8 per cent in secondary education and from 16.25 per cent to 27 per cent in primary education, as indicated by the following table:

Number of physical education instructors

		Primary			Secondary	
Year	Total	Women	Percentage	Total	Women	Percentage
1992/93	652	106	16.25	2 921	584	19.80
1993/94	661	116	17.50	3 055	601	19.70
1994/95	660	124	18.80	3 132	701	22.40
1995/96	751	157	21.00	3 253	721	22.20
1996/97	920	225	24.50	3 433	753	22.00
1997/98	1 031	279	27.00	3 385	773	22.80

Source: Ministry of Youth and Childhood.

IX.3. School and university sport

867. Since 1992, the number of young girls taking part in school sports has clearly increased in accordance with the recommendations for the promotion of female sport drawn up by the Ministry of Youth and Childhood.

868. Through the Tunisian Federation of School and University Sports, the Ministry of Youth and Childhood has taken measures aimed at:

- Popularizing the practice of sport among the rural girls enrolled in vocational training centres and girls at the Training Centre for Young Rural Women (CFR) and at the centres for the re-education of minors;
- Reintroducing the female practice of individual and team sports, starting in schools;
- Canvassing and encouraging civil clubs to sponsor female sections in school associations;
- Encouraging educational institutions to establish sports clubs specializing in female sport;
- Increasing the number of young girls with school and university sports permits;
- Varying the type of female sports competitions at the national and regional levels.

Prospects

869. Women's access to home loans and income-generating credit is increasingly encouraged by the public authorities with a view to strengthening the role of women as agents of development. The creation of new finance mechanisms, including BTS, and the establishment of a new system of microcredit are likely to open up new and promising horizons for women who have difficulty in accessing the traditional forms of bank credit.

870. The diversification of the sources of microcredit will help to strengthen both the average and vulnerable social groups, favouring an increasingly active role for women who undertake small projects in the highly dynamic informal sector.

871. Women's access to the different sectors of cultural life is also in full swing and constitutes an expression of the democratization of public and political life, in this case the policy of protecting and strengthening women's rights.

Article 14: Rural women

"1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

"2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measure to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

"(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

"(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

"(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

"(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

"(e) To organize self-help groups and cooperatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

"(f) To participate in all community activities;

"(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities and appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

"(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications."

872. The policy of decentralized development followed in Tunisia has particularly encouraged the harmonious development of every region throughout the country. It has also strengthened the infrastructure of social and economic life, education and health and, where necessary, identified the needs for social and economic infrastructure in order to enable every citizen, without discrimination, to enjoy the benefit of vital services with a view to their economic and social development.

873. This approach has been strengthened by a global approach to human rights, the connotation of which includes economic, social and cultural rights in addition to civil and political rights, in particular the right to a decent life, translated in practice by the sustained commitment of the State to the most deprived rural areas.

874. National solidarity as a fundamental value inherent to our civilization has positively furthered the effective application of this approach and the successes registered in the development of rural areas, particularly those with the greatest amount of deprivation, referred to as "zones d'ombre" (areas of economic depression), which are a top priority for the State.

875. Rural women have therefore benefited from special attention, as demonstrated by the technical and financial support provided to their productive activities in the field of agriculture and handicrafts, as well as by the consideration given to their specific needs in the various programmes and measures undertaken in the interests of their well-being.

I. Access to services

I.1. Improvement of the quality of life

876. The efforts made in connection with the basic socio-economic infrastructure through the national programmes for the supply of drinking water and electricity have clearly improved the coverage rates nationwide, which increased from 72.5 per cent in 1984 to 91.6 per cent in 1999 for drinking water supply and from 63.4 per cent in 1984 to 94.6 per cent in 1999 for electricity supply.

877. In rural areas, the proportion of households connected to the network of the National Water Exploitation and Distribution Company (SONEDE) rose from 11.9 per cent to 24.1 per cent between 1989 and 1994. The proportion connected to the services of the Tunisian Gas and Electricity Company (STEG) experienced a similar rise during the same period, having increased from 39.34 per cent in 1989 to 63.69 per cent in 1994, according to statistics from the National Institute of Statistics.

878. The statistical growth illustrated by the following tables indicates the sustained commitment of the State to provide rural areas with the necessary basic infrastructures and improve the quality of rural life.

Domestic water supply by environment (per cent)

Means of supply	Urban environment*			Rural environment*			Total		
	1984	1989	1994	1984	1989	1994	1984	1989	1994
Running water (SONEDE)	81.7	88.3	94.3	10.8	11.9	24.1	49.4	58.4	69.1
Private source (tank or well)	7.4	4.8	3.4	28.1	27.1	30.1	16.8	13.5	13.0
Planned public source (communal well, public fountain)	8.7	6.6	2.1	40.2	47.3	36.1	23.1	22.5	14.2
Unplanned public source (wadi or other)	2.2	0.3	0.2	20.9	13.7	9.7	10.7	5.6	3.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* Communal environment instead of urban environment and non-communal environment instead of rural environment for 1994.

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

Domestic lighting methods by environment (per cent)

	1989					1994				
Environment	STEG	Paraffin Primus	Paraffin lamp	Other	Total	STEG	Paraffin Primus	Paraffin lamp	Other	Total
Urban	95.39	0.80	3.47	0.34	100	98.20	0.25	1.39	0.15	100
Rural	39.94	4.66	54.83	1.08	100	63.69	2.65	32.95	0.71	100
Total	73.17	2.30	23.46	0.63	100	85.86	1.11	12.68	0.35	100

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

Main source of energy used for meal preparation by area
(percentage of households)

Area	Gas	Paraffin	Coal/wood	Other	Total
1989					
Urban	93.84	5.05	0.89	0.23	100
Rural	67.31	12.54	19.81	0.34	100
Overall	83.14	7.95	8.26	0.27	100
1994					
Communal	97.89	1.30	0.63	0.18	100
Non-communal	86.40	2.29	11.11	0.20	100
Overall	93.75	1.65	4.41	0.19	100

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

I.2. Education

879. The major reform of the Tunisian education system undertaken by Tunisia since 1991, the cornerstone of which is the establishment of compulsory schooling between the ages of 6 and 16, with penalties for parents or guardians who fail to carry out this requirement, has had a positive impact on the school attendance rate for girls and has increased the length of time during which they remain in full-time education, particularly in rural areas.

880. In addition to the institution of basic schools, other measures have been taken to benefit rural areas, such as strengthening the school network, readjusting the school timetable to fit in better with rural life and improving the school infrastructure (connection to drinking water and electricity supplies, construction of road tracks and so on).

881. On the national scale, the rate for those in full-time education at six years of age is now almost universal for both boys and girls, having reached 99 per cent in 1998. During the same period, the rates for those in full-time education between the ages of 6 and 12 increased by 6.3 percentage points for girls (from 85.2 per cent to 91.5 per cent) and by only 1 percentage point for boys (from 92 per cent to 93 per cent).

Girls in full-time education in rural and urban areas (second cycle of basic secondary education)

	1994-1995			1997-1998			Progress index for girls
Regions	Total	Girls	% Girls	Total	Girls	% Girls	1994/95-1997/98
Tunis	72 681	38 022	52.31	87 068	46 058	52.89	121.1
Kasserime	25 936	10 970	42.29	32 311	14 382	44.51	131.1
Sidi Bouzid	28 908	12 084	41.80	36 376	16 493	45.3	136.5
General total	622 222	320 055	48.33	833 372	418 409	50.20	130.7

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

882. This progress has largely benefited rural areas, where young girls were at a disadvantage. The two predominantly rural governorates of Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid illustrate perfectly the progress occurring in the number of young girls in full-time education in rural areas. In these two governorates, the number of girls in basic education increased from 42.29 per cent and 41.9 per cent respectively in 1994 to 44.5 per cent and 45.34 per cent in 1997/98, producing a progress index of 131.1 and 136.5 respectively, which is considerably higher than that recorded in the governorate of Tunis (121.1) and clearly above the national average (130.7).

883. The following tables show that the number of rural girls in full-time education is clearly growing, having risen from 9 to 10 points for the 6-9 and 10-14 age groups between 1989 and 1994, compared with 4 and 2 points respectively for boys and 5 and 3 points for girls in urban areas, which is evidence of the trend of narrowing gaps between boys and girls and between urban and rural environments.

Percentage of pupils in full-time education by sex and age group according to environment

	1989					
	Urban			Rural		
Age group	Males	Females	Overall	Males	Females	Overall
6-9 years	87.2	87.2	87.2	80.3	68.0	74.3
10-14 years	91.2	88.1	89.7	81.6	55.6	68.8
15-19 years	57.9	52.0	55.0	42.6	17.2	30.0
20-24 years	25.8	19.0	22.5	14.6	3.9	9.3
25-29 years	5.4	2.9	4.2	2.2	0.7	1.4

	1994					
	Urban			Rural		
Age group	Males	Females	Overall	Males	Females	Overall
6-9 years	92.4	92.3	92.4	84.7	77.1	81.0
10-14 years	92.5	91.5	92.0	83.7	65.9	75.1
15-19 years	58.6	57.9	58.3	41.2	23.6	32.5
20-24 years	29.5	24.4	27.0	18.3	7.2	12.7
25-29 years	6.7	3.1	4.9	2.7	0.5	1.6

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

884. Since 1992, premature drop-out from school has been constantly falling and also showing a reverse trend in favour of girls.

885. In some rural areas, the lack of proximity to schools inhibits improvement of the school attendance rates, particularly in the case of girls.

886. In accordance with the State's democratic commitments, the Ministry of Education, aware of the need to achieve equal opportunities for children in full-time education, has established a multidisciplinary and multisectoral commission with a view to studying the problem of premature school drop-out in basic education.

887. The development of the school infrastructure, particularly as a result of the rural development and national solidarity programmes, is of increasing benefit to rural areas. Bearing in mind the changes in the national demographic profile and the achievements already accomplished in rural environments, it is primarily the rural areas which will benefit from the forthcoming establishment of new schools.

I.3. The fight against illiteracy

888. Although the national illiteracy rate has been clearly falling since 1966 (having dropped from 67.9 per cent in 1966 to 31.7 per cent in 1994 and 27 per cent in 1999), it remains significant in rural areas, where, according to the 1999 national survey of population and employment, it remains at 40.8 per cent compared with 19 per cent in urban areas (in 1994, it was respectively 46.2 per cent compared with 22.8 per cent).

889. Even though it has fallen considerably, female illiteracy is a fundamental characteristic of the disparities between the rural and urban environments, with a rate of 53.2 per cent compared with 26.4 per cent in urban areas (respectively 60.1 per cent compared with 31.5 per cent in 1994), whereas for men it is respectively 28.2 per cent and 11.8 per cent (compared with 32.2 per cent and 14.5 per cent in 1994).

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890. However, the data from the 1994 census on the educational characteristics of the population indicate a slight fall in the illiteracy rate among this population group, notably among the 20-24 age group (from 62.8 per cent in 1989 to 46.1 per cent in 1994) and among the 15-19 age group (from 42.8 per cent to 29.1 per cent) (see the tables following paragraph 569).

891. During the five-year period 1997-2001, the second segment of the literacy programme gives priority to young people between the ages of 15 and 29. By the end of the Ninth Plan, it should have had an impact on approximately 160,000 illiterate individuals, including in particular the female population in rural areas and areas where the illiteracy rate is at its highest. It should also have limited the proportion of learners lost in the second level and encouraged anyone having obtained the second-level social education certificate to pursue the post-literacy programme.

I.4. Access to health services

892. Rural areas have derived the most benefit from the State's efforts to establish basic health centres, particularly in the regions of the north-west, the centre west and the south. Launched in 1991, the population and family health project, which aims to promote basic health care and maternal and child health care in particular, has implemented a strategy based on a number of core issues, including the integration of maternal and child health care into the basic health care activities carried out in the basic health care centres.

893. National prevention programmes are implemented on an ongoing basis in the country's most remote regions by means of 1,200 focal points which are visited by the mobile units belonging to the Ministry of Public Health and ONFP.

894. In 1997, the national rate of accessibility to basic health care and reproductive health services amounted to 90.6 per cent if the permanent facilities alone are taken into account and 100 per cent if the mobile services network is also taken into account. Services actually tripled between 1987 and 1997, particularly in the priority regions of the south and centre west.

895. In 1996, WHO awarded the Health-for-All Gold Medal to Tunisia in recognition of the substantial achievements accomplished in promoting health for all, with the rural world as the prime target.

896. Since 1994, a specific programme targeting the most disadvantaged rural regions and entitled "The promotion of family health in areas of economic depression" has been developed and implemented by the National Family and Population Office (ONFP). This programme, which aims to promote prenatal and reproductive health in such regions, has a strategy based on the role of local rural women organizers whose task it is to raise awareness among the women in their own communities.

897. In the governorates of the centre east and south, 405 areas of economic depression have benefited from this programme, which consists of extensive awareness-raising activities carried out by local women organizers and the provision of reproductive health care by the newly introduced mobile clinics.

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898. In all, over 700 areas of economic depression identified as priorities receive regular visits from mobile teams offering prenatal, postnatal, gynaecological and family planning services to inhabitants that are additional to the mobile programme already in operation in rural areas.

899. The overall indicators and maternity indicators in particular have improved as a result of the fact that maternal and reproductive health are now covered by the basic health care centres. In Sidi Bouzid, for example, the take-up rate for first prenatal consultations increased from 49 per cent in 1989 to 69 per cent in 1996, which is an increase of 20 points within a 10-year period. The following table is extremely revealing in this regard:

Change in health indicators in areas of economic depression (per cent)

Indicators	1994	1998
Contraceptive use	34	56
Prenatal care	69	78
Assisted delivery	65	78
Postnatal care	19	65

Source: ONFP.

900. The PAP child survey conducted in 1995 by ONFT with the League of Arab States shows that, in urban areas, 77.7 per cent of pregnant women benefited from prenatal consultations compared with 62.4 per cent in rural areas. Similarly, the proportion of women having hospital deliveries increased to over 80 per cent at the national level, but remained conspicuously lower in the governorates of Sidi Bouzid (50 per cent) and Kasserine (44 per cent).

901. As for maternal mortality, while the national rate stands at 69 per 100,000 live births, the national survey conducted in 1993-1994 shows a higher rate in western Tunisia (99.4) than in eastern Tunisia (51.6).

I.5. Access to employment

902. The data from the most recent population census (1994) indicate that the proportion of women among the actively employed inhabitants in rural areas increased from 17.6 per cent to 20 per cent between 1989 and 1994.

903. In 1994, the number of economically active rural women amounted to 159,797, representing an increase of 26.9 per cent in comparison with 1989. A majority of these women, amounting to almost two-thirds, are employed in agriculture.

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The female workforce in the industrial sector

904. One-third of economically active rural women work in the manufacturing industries, especially in textiles. In the governorate of Siliana, where 68.11 per cent of the population are rural inhabitants, 41.8 per cent of the economically active female inhabitants are employed in the manufacturing industry. In Kairouan, where 69.7 per cent of the population are rural inhabitants, 51 per cent of the economically active female inhabitants work in the manufacturing industry.

Significance of female employment in the manufacturing industry in some of the predominantly rural governorates (1994)

Governorate	Percentage of the rural population	Percentage of the economically active female population employed in the manufacturing industry
Zaghouan	66.06	35.5
Siliana	68.11	41.8
Kairouan	70.75	51
Kasserine	62.40	38
Sidi Bouzid	78.52	32.4

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

905. The development of the female wage-earning class is one of the most significant changes seen in rural employment for two decades.

906. For a fairly substantial proportion of rural families, the employment of girls as industrial workers is an increasingly important source of income in the household budget and is unquestionably an extremely significant factor of social change in rural environments.

907. The second major characteristic of female employment in rural areas is that it includes a significant proportion of girls between the ages of 15 and 29, representing 57.8 per cent in 1994 compared with 17 per cent for those aged between 30 and 39 and 14 per cent for those over the age of 50. This particular structure of the economically active female population in rural areas is linked to two factors: first, the significance of family labour in rural areas and secondly, the concentration of female wage-earners in the manufacturing industry, which predominantly employs young women.

The female workforce in the agricultural sector

908. The changes in the agricultural sector over a period of two decades show a clear increase in the number of women who play a part in gricultural work.

Although the number of inhabitants economically active in agriculture has registered a downward trend, having fallen from 509,000 in 1975 to 500,000 in 1994, statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture show that the female workforce in the agricultural sector is periodically growing.

909. The number of economically active women in the field of agriculture increased from 69,000 in 1975 to 107,000 in 1994. In relative terms, the share of the female agricultural workforce is also growing, having increased from 13.6 per cent in 1994 to 21.4 per cent in 1997.

Growth of the population actively employed in agriculture by sex

	1966		1975		1984		1989		1994	
Sex	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	440	98.2	440	86.4	380	79.8	422	82.7	393	78.6
Female	8	1.8	69	13.6	96	20.2	87	17.3	107	21.4
Total	448	100	509	100	476	100	509	100	500	100

Number in millions.

Source: National Institute of Statistics, CREDIF report on rural women.

910. Taking into account the figures shown by the survey of small farms conducted during the period 1994-1995 by the Ministry of Agriculture, the number of women working in family agriculture increased significantly to 708,000, compared with figures of 392,000 shown by the follow-up survey to the 1993/94 agricultural campaign (conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture).

911. These figures bring the proportion of women working in family agriculture to 64.29 per cent.

912. According to the same survey, the proportion of economically active rural women among permanent wage-earners also increased from 5.56 per cent in 1993-1994 to 9.53 per cent in 1994-1995 and among temporary agricultural wage-earners from 24 per cent to 38.01 per cent.

913. In the past few years, the diversification of production systems and the development of the productive sectors which use intensive labour (irrigated vegetable and fruit farming) have been largely reliant on mobilizing the female labour in small family run farms, as well as within the framework of the agricultural wage-earning class. This trend is set to grow, since the irrigated surface area is due to increase by 25,000 hectares during the Ninth Plan.

914. As the CREDIF report points out, this development means that, for a large proportion of small farms, production is undeniably dependent on the employment of rural women and girls.

915. In agriculture, the employment of women is characterized by:

- Its essential relation to the family in the sense that women engage in work on small family-run farms;
- The substantial increase in the number of female agricultural wage-earners, although the work is basically seasonal;
- The fact that a minority of women are in charge of running small farms.

Women farmers

916. The basic agricultural survey conducted in 1990 recorded a figure of 15,000 women in charge of running small farms, which is 3.8 per cent of the total number of farmers. In 1994-1995, the survey of small farms reported a total of 26,200 women farmers (5.6 per cent of the total number of farmers), only 10,400 of whom devoted the majority of their time to farming. The National Institute of Statistics in turn recorded a figure of 22,100 women in charge of running small farms in 1994.

917. Moreover, in some of the governorates of a predominantly agricultural and rural nature, the percentage of women heads of household is relatively high, as in the case of the governorates of Jendouba, Kef, Kébili and Tataouine, where it stands at 17.25 per cent, 16.55 per cent, 20.58 per cent and 17.86 per cent respectively.

918. More recently, the policy of promoting agricultural investments has encouraged young women farmers holding certificates from engineering and agricultural colleges to set up on their own account. The number of agricultural projects established by women, however, remains small. According to statistics produced by APIA, only 310, or 3.3 per cent, of the total of 9,200 approved portfolios have been submitted by women since the Agency was first established. It is true to say, however, that the agricultural projects carried out by women usually fall within the category of small projects and are not therefore subject to consideration by the APIA approval committees.

919. Significant social and cultural constraints (lack of training, limited access to information and technical extension services and the image of women in rural society) make the task of running farms even more difficult for women, particularly in regard to relationships with the outside world in terms of supply, credit, extension services and marketing.

Craftswomen

920. Depending on the region, rural women pursue a variety of handicraft activities, such as wool-weaving, pottery and glass-making, essentially as much to satisfy family needs as to earn extra household income.

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921. In 1993, the National Handicrafts Office (ONAT) reported a total of 190,000 craftswomen broken down as follows:

- 63,000 working for and in the workshops of a subsidiary production company of ONAT;
- Approximately 53,000 working under subcontract to private firms, either at home or in small workshops opened by such firms;
- 73,000 craftswomen working for themselves at home.

922. In 1995, ONAT had issued 8,064 vocational cards to craftspersons, including 7,495 women, representing 92 per cent of the total.

923. Despite the incentives from which craftswomen have benefited (70 per cent of the funds allocated within the framework of ONAT's working capital), they encounter various problems, in particular poor remuneration, lack of training and marketing difficulties, which often means that they are dependent on middlemen.

924. Despite their decisive role in agricultural work, women have generally benefited only very little from the credit programmes aimed at promoting productive activities and have only very recently been affected by the efforts to extend agriculture. It is largely since the implementation of the Eighth National Development Plan (1992) that the will to act in the interests of rural women in various domains has been clearly affirmed.

925. Consequently, whether in terms of the perception of women's activities held by families or by women themselves or whether in terms of employment statistics or agricultural development and extension programmes, the work of rural women has, until recently, been recognized only to a limited degree.

II. National development and anti-poverty programmes

926. The will to strengthen the integration of rural women into development has been increasingly clearly expressed since the Eighth Development Plan (1992-1996), which affirmed the need to ensure that all agricultural and rural development programmes include a component that takes account of the specific needs of rural women.

927. The growth in the various activities from which rural women have benefited since the 1990s reveals a change in the approaches governing those activities, both within the organizations which carry them out and elsewhere. Essentially driven by social concerns, these approaches extend to include an economic and technical dimension. In addition, the spectrum of institutions working in the interests of rural women comprises not only the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture but also the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment and the Ministry of Environment, as well as non-governmental organizations.

928. Taking into account the consequences of economic restructuring and the integration of the national economy into the international market and fitting

into the category of improving overall standards, the Ninth Plan embarked on strengthening this option by including the promotion of women's human resources in the rural world as one of the strategic objectives of the five-year period 1997-2001.

II.1. Government programmes

929. The new strategies now in place centre around two core issues: the establishment of specific mechanisms and programmes and the readjustment of existing programmes and instruments.

II.1.1. Development-related projects

The Regional Development Programme (PRD)

930. The objectives of the Regional Development Programme run by the General Commission for Regional Development (CGDR) and other national and regional institutions are to improve living conditions (housing and infrastructures) in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, create and strengthen jobs and sources of income, train young people and integrate them into economic activity and combat unemployment and underemployment.

931. In addition to support projects for the productive activities of women (donations of weaving looms and sewing machines), handicraft training courses for young women are organized as part of PRD. These programmes are implemented by the regional authorities. According to the statistics available, the number of young women benefiting from such training courses amounted to 5,013 in 1993 and 4,300 in 1994.

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (PDRI)

932. Developed since the mid-1980s, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (PDRI), which is under the authority of the General Commission for Regional Development (CGDR), adopted a new approach within the framework of the Eighth Plan (1992-1996) that consists of taking simultaneous account of the different aspects of rural development with a view to ensuring that the activities carried out achieve a better success rate.

933. Women in charge of running farms have benefited from productive agricultural activities in the fields of tree cultivation, irrigation and livestock farming. Within the framework of the "small trade" component of PDRI, women have benefited from financial and technical support in the interests of developing income-generating activities.

934. The second generation of PDRI aimed to target women specifically. Between 1994 and 1999, PDRI was scheduled to finance approximately 100 projects. The first set of 54 projects would enable the creation of 20,000 jobs, including 7,000, or about 30 per cent, set aside for women.

935. Other than productive projects, women have benefited from measures aimed at improving the basic infrastructures and living conditions (road tracks, schools, drinking water, health centres and electricity).

The Integrated Urban Development Programme (PDUI)

936. PDUI represents a new type of development project which combines both urban and rural projects at the regional level. It intervenes at the district level to improve the living conditions of inhabitants by establishing productive projects which create jobs and social projects. Among the target groups are women homemakers, particularly those with a vocational qualification. The measures planned for their benefit are aimed at developing family economics and domestic activities. In particular, they consist of strengthening or establishing home-based handicraft activities and encouraging the creation of women's microenterprises. Complementary training activities are also offered in association with the National Handicrafts Office,

937. The surveys conducted in the urban fringe districts which come under the programme have highlighted the decisive contribution of women in making up the family income. In order to strengthen women's economic activities and enhance their contribution to alleviating the manifestations of urban poverty, PDUI has identified two components specifically targeted at women:

- The establishment and strengthening of handicraft activities;
- The granting of working capital to finance activities.

938. Women receive a subsidy of 300 dinars and credit up to a fixed maximum of 2,700 dinars for the purpose of establishing or developing a handicraft unit. The programme is intended to cater for 1,210 women. By the end of February 1996, 331 microprojects had been implemented at a cost of 452,000 dinars.

939. Craftswomen also benefit from working capital granted by ONAT, the amount of which is fixed on the basis of the amount of the investment. The programme is in a position to award a total of 915 funds of working capital, 632 of which have already been allocated to the tune of 550,000 dinars.

940. In order to support the PDUI activities aimed specifically at women, a plan of action to promote women's activities in impoverished areas has been formulated. The objective of this plan is to define programme activities more effectively on the basis of in-depth surveys of women and better coordination with the various institutional partners.

941. The first PDUI segment comprises 14 pilot projects, including those of Ezzouhour (Kasserine), Borgi (Kairouan) and Ennasr (Mateur), which were launched in 1994. The cost of the first phase is 39 million dinars, 29 million of them for the three above-mentioned pilot projects. The second phase comprises 16 projects, each costing an average of 3 million dinars.

II.1.2. Programmes developed by the Ministry of Agriculture

942. Self-sufficiency in food and the reduction of economic and social disparities between urban and rural environments constituted the priorities for agricultural development throughout the period of the Eighth Plan. The development strategy maintained was based on five key points: enhancement of the institutional and economic environment in agriculture, the implementation of

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sectoral production strategies, the improvement of living conditions and advancement of the rural world, the conservation of the natural environment and the mobilization of water resources. Within the framework of this strategy, the Eighth Plan incorporated the question of women's participation in agricultural development.

943. At the present time, the advancement of rural women and girls is a component of all integrated rural development projects carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and financed within the framework of bilateral and multilateral financial and technical cooperation. Specific training activities and the promotion of income-generating activities on the basis of microprojects are planned and executed through the non-governmental organizations involved in implementing this component.

944. Within the framework of the Ninth Plan, 10 integrated projects are planned, four of which were started in 1998.

945. The three main national programmes, namely the national strategy for water and land conservation, the development of forestry and the intensification of irrigation farming, attach particular importance, in the context of the participatory approach, to women and their involvement in the management and rational exploitation of natural resources and to the improvement of women's incomes. The major development programmes include measures which target women's productive activities and which also aim to ensure that women play a part in the preservation of natural resources and the protection of ecosystems.

946. Several pilot projects implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture include a women's component, in particular:

- The Tunisian-Algerian pilot project for the integrated development of the drainage basin of the Haut Méllègue (implemented in the governorate of Kasserine);
- The project for the agricultural development of the Sidi Mehedheb plateau (governorates of Sfax and Sidi Bouzid);
- The project for the integrated agricultural development of the north-west (governorate of Kairouan);
- The project for the agricultural development of the south-west of Kef (governorate of Kef);
- The project for the protection and development of forestry and pastureland (governorate of Kairouan).

947. The women's component of these projects comprises three types of measures· measures aimed at lightening the workload of women by limiting the pressure on natural resources; training activities; and productive activities aimed at developing small agricultural and livestock farming project.

II.2. Contribution of non-governmental organizations to rural development

948. A number of non-governmental organizations are active in the rural environment in a variety of spheres: educational activities, health, agricultural development and crafts. The activities of the non-governmental organizations working in the field of development received a boost from the move to promote organizations at the beginning of the 1990s.

949. The National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT) is active through its regional and local facilities in the fields of education, training and development, as well as in promoting rural activities and publicizing women's rights. UNFT manages various training centres for young women that are located throughout the whole of Tunisia. These centres are geared towards providing types of training (weaving, dressmaking and embroidery) which lead to better qualifications and respond more effectively to the characteristics of the regional economies and the requirements of the employment market.

950. The UNFT Young Women's Modern Agricultural Training Centre commenced its activities in 1995. Funded by the Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organization (AGFUND), this centre has a dual function: to provide training which leads to qualifications in agricultural technologies and to prepare young women to set up agricultural projects This centre caters for young women who are educated to between the sixth primary and baccalaureate levels. At the end of the training, which lasts for a set period of 11 months, the young women obtain certificates as qualified agricultural workers. The training programme includes a module on the establishment and management of microprojects, in which context UNFT has signed three partnership agreements with BTS, MAFF and the National Solidarity Fund.

951. Originally part of the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the 170 centres for young rural women have been transferred to UNFT. Following an assessment carried out in conjunction with UNFPA and the Vocational Training and Employment Agency, a decision was made to improve the training programmes in these centres and also transform them into production centres with a view to ensuring sources of finance.

952. The activities offered by the UNFT centres also include the establishment of literacy classes, as well as classes for the economic advancement of young rural women.

The Tunisian Foundation of Community Development (FTDC)

953. FTDC is active in the centre of the country. Within the framework of a community development approach, it is experimenting with informal rural credit to finance women's productive activities. FTDC has been called on to run the components of various government development programmes that relate to women and the promotion of rural activities.

The ATLAS Foundation for Self-Development and Solidarity

954. One such project which should be mentioned is the project for the distillation of aromatic plants in the region of Ain Draham, which aims to train

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160 women in how to utilize and distil aromatic essences from forest areas so that they can then produce them for sale.

The Self-Development Support Association (ASAD)

955. Since 1994, ASAD has implemented a support project in Ouesslatia for 128 ONAT-approved craftswomen with the aim of enhancing their vocational skills and their organizational capacities so that they can then market their products more effectively.

The Tunisian Social Solidarity Union (UTSS)

956. UTSS carries out development activities in connection with the establishment of livestock farming projects for young women having completed an apprenticeship in an agricultural training centre. A dairy-farming project aimed specifically at women has been established in El Djem. In the region of Menzel Bourguiba, a project for recycling textile factory waste has been established with a view to helping impoverished women and is to be extended to other governorates under an agreement with UNFT. UTSS has established dressmaking units run by girls who have been through training in the young rural women's centres. The aim of these units, which produce items for sale, is to provide girls with an introduction to the management of productive projects. In the region of Thibar, for example, girls trained in the centres for young rural women have obtained credit in order to establish projects in various activity sectors.

The Association for Development and the Promotion of Rural Activities (ASDEAR)

957. ASDEAR supports the productive activities of women as part of an agricultural development project in the oasis of Tameghza (Tozeur). It implements small livestock farming projects targeted at women in the region of Kala'at Andalous (Ariana) and Saouef (Zaghouan). This non-governmental organization has just established a young women's training centre in Saouef which operates with UNFT support.

The Association for the Promotion of Employment and Housing (APEL)

958. As part of the project for the development of the Ain Draham-Tabarka valley, APEL has established a young women's training centre in Oued Ezzène. This centre offers training for a period of two years, the first of which is devoted to basic training and the second to specialized training in weaving and sewing.

The Kef Regional Development Foundation (FKDR)

959. FKDR is active in the north-west of Tunisia and is currently carrying out two projects for rural women:

- The first project is part of the national strategy to reduce the school drop-out rate among rural girls in the most disadvantaged areas of the governorate of Kef.

- The second project aims to develop income-generating activities, training and women's groups by means of handicrafts and agriculture.

The Tunisian Mothers' Association (ATM)

960. ATM operates mainly in the most disadvantaged rural areas, in particular the economically depressed areas targeted by the National Solidarity Fund 26-26. Its activities are focused on social assistance, promotion of the role of family aid and help for young rural women in difficulty. ATM also makes periodic use of multidisciplinary mobile teams in order to bring reproductive health services, basic health services and legal guidance within closer reach of rural women.

ENDA Inter-Arab

961. This association, which obtained its licence in 1999 (and which was originally a section of ENDA International), has been implementing an integrated development programme since 1995 in the urban fringe districts of Hay Ettadhamen in north-western Tunis that is particularly aimed at women heads of family and young people with time on their hands. The project consists of three components: support for microenterprises (microcredit, training for microentrepeneurs, technical assistance and follow-up), help with economic and social integration (training and vocational initiation, literacy and cultural activities) and a health education component started in 1999.

Women's Action for Sustainable Development (AFDD)

962. AFDD is carrying out a project for sustainable development and nature protection in the area of Abdeladhim in the governorate of Kasserine (in the centre west), the aim of which is to create sources of income while also reducing the pressure on natural resources. Targeted at 253 impoverished families, the particular focus of its activities is to provide women with training in beekeeping, gardening and handicrafts, as well as with technical and financial support for setting up microprojects.

II.3. National social assistance programmes

Productive social assistance projects

963. In order to further the assistance offered by the National Programme of Aid to Needy Families (PNAFN), the Ministry of Social Affairs has been establishing productive projects since 1990, including the project for the advancement of single parent families in the governorate of Kairouan aimed at women heads of family. The women benefiting from the project already receive help from PNAFN and must have a plot of land with an area of at least two hectares. A total of 223 women benefit from the activities of this project, which donates funds for the cultivation of trees and cereals.

964. Other projects which adopt the same integrated development approach have been established in the regions of Jendouba, Siliana and Tarkana, as well as in Hay Ettadhamen in the governorate of Ariana. This project's activities are concerned with agriculture, livestock farming and handicrafts. The main project

in Reihane, in the region of Tabarka, benefits a total of 115 individuals, including 60 women. The total budget allocated to the various integrated projects amounts to 590,000 dinars, almost one-third of which (185,000 dinars) has benefited women heads of family.

III. Finance and incentive mechanisms

965. Within the framework of the promotion of investments in rural agricultural areas, a number of mechanisms have been established since the 1980s to encourage the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises in particular in different sectors of activity. These mechanisms, however, have only successfully promoted women's productive projects to a limited degree.

966. Within the framework of the activities of the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investments (APIA), which was established in 1993 to encourage the development of productive projects in agriculture, various projects have been promoted by women farmers. The number of such projects, however, remains extremely small, accounting for less than 3 per cent of the total, despite the considerable increase in the number of approvals granted by APIA to women's projects during recent years (111 projects between 1988 and 1992 and 182 projects between 1992 and 1996, compared with 17 between 1985 and 1987).

967. Other funds, such as the Integrated Rural Fund and the National Fund for Handicrafts and Small Trades (FONAPRAM) (13 per cent), have only been of limited benefit to rural women in view of the fact that they represent no more than 5.6 per cent of individuals in charge of running farms and are unable to provide sufficient guarantees to obtain bank credit.

968. The working capital fund of the National Handicrafts Office (ONAT) benefits over 70 per cent of craftswomen. Between 1989 and 1994, a total of 7,800 craftswomen benefited from working capital allocated by ONAT in the sum of 7.8 million dinars, representing 72.2 per cent of the allocated total of 10.8 million dinars. In 1995, the amount of working capital allocated to women rose to 2.5 million dinars, corresponding to 3,956 projects, from a total amount of 3.16 million dinars. The working capital allocated varied between 500 and 2,000 dinars.

969. The women's share in the total amount of ONAT funds awarded to handicrafts is constantly rising.

970. ONAT also actively supports the activities of various development programmes. Accordingly, in 1992, 250 separate working capital sums amounting to 22,000 dinars were awarded to economically depressed areas, together with working capital amounting to 350,000 dinars for the activities of the urban development programme.

971. Women and girls employed in ONAT workshops, as well as those who work from home, whether on their own account or as subcontractors, have frequently benefited from training in the various centres run by ONAT and UNFT and additionally from rural development programmes. Most of these individuals have a primary level of education.

IV. New mechanisms

972. Finance and community development mechanisms have led the State to strengthen the means of accelerating development in certain regions while emphasizing self-responsibility and the spirit of initiative of the target population.

973. The National Solidarity Fund and the Tunisian Solidarity Bank thus emerged during the 1990s to confirm the State's concern for the most deprived and its commitment to an overall approach to human rights that entails combating all forms of social exclusion with a view to guaranteeing universal enjoyment of the right to a decent life and to dignity.

IV.1. The National Solidarity Fund 26-26

974. Created in 1993 on the initiative of the President of the Republic, Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, the National Solidarity Fund provides finance for the implementation of basic infrastructure projects (drinking water, electricity, tracks and roads, housing, schools and health centres) and the establishment of microprojects (agriculture, handicrafts and small trades) in areas which have no basic infrastructure and little, if any, economic potential. The 26-26 projects are supported by specific programmes carried out by different departments.

975. More commonly known as "zones d'ombre" (areas of economic depression), these areas were integrated into a promotion plan which spanned the years 1993-2000. Altogether, there are 1,144 such areas, containing about 200,000 families. The cost of implementing the projects which form part of the plan is estimated at 500 million dinars, of which 100 million is earmarked for microprojects.

976. Whether directly or indirectly, the efforts of the National Solidarity Fund have an impact on women. As a result of the drinking water projects (from 1993 to 1997) which connected almost 50,000 households to the SONEDE network, for instance, women found themselves either completely released from the arduous chore of carrying water, which previously took up practically their entire day, or travelling much shorter distances (not more than one kilometre) in order to carry drinking water from fire hydrants managed by collectives (AIC).

977. In addition, the completion of 2,011 kilometres of road tracks opened up the areas concerned, thus allowing round-the-clock access to vehicles and people and helping to reduce mortality, especially among pregnant women, who were previously trapped, particularly during the rainy season.

978. The completion and equipment of 94 schools went hand in hand with projects to build roads and rural tracks in order to ensure that young girls had uninterrupted access to education, thus playing a part in the fight against illiteracy, which has hitherto been fairly high among rural women.

979. The completion of 85 basic health centres and the renovation or new construction of dwellings (12,246) has also helped to ensure a healthy environment for women and access to various preventive health services (immunization), as well as therapeutic health services. These centres have been

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equipped with the material and human resources capable of offering a minimum range of primary health services to citizens.

980. Since 1995, the Fund has endeavoured to create income-generating projects. Between 1995 and 1997, 31,000 microprojects were implemented, 68 per cent of them devoted to agriculture. Rural women have benefited directly from handicraft projects, which represent 26 per cent of all projects, as well as indirectly from agricultural projects for rural families.

981. The Fund also targets young rural women who have had the benefit of training in the young rural women's centres. As such, it awarded microfinance (of 3,000-6,000 dinars) to young women holding certificates from the Modern Agricultural Training Centre in Chebedda, which is run by UNFT, under a partnership agreement for the period 1998-1999 aimed at 160 young women.

IV.2. The Tunisian Solidarity Bank (BTS)

982. The establishment of BTS in December 1997 responded to the needs of small entrepreneurs while also taking into account their constraints, thereby enabling them to overcome the obstacles encountered in gaining access to the usual sources of finance. Since the establishment of the Bank, women have therefore benefited from the provision of finance for 27.1 per cent of projects, which amounts to 5,988 of the total number of 22,095. As the two sectors in which women are highly concentrated, agriculture and handicrafts accounted for 12.9 per cent of the projects set up by women.

983. According to geographical division, over half of the projects are in greater Tunis and the north-east. However, the two predominantly rural regions (the north-west and the centre west) attract almost one quarter of the women's projects financed by BTS.

Breakdown of BTS beneficiaries/women by region

Region	Number of credits	Per cent	Average credits	Average self-finance	Jobs created
North-east	1 619	42.1	3 521	227	2 274
North-west	417	10.8	2 693	216	553
Centre west	447	11.6	2 756	193	732
Centre east	594	15.4	4 297	359	1 003
South-west	442	11.5	2 699	231	840
South-east	331	8.6	3 250	211	480
Total	3 850	100	3 345	241	5 882

Source: BTS.

984. In order to encourage rural women's access to credit, BTS has signed agreements with the National Solidarity Fund 26-26 for financing projects established by young women with training in agriculture and handicrafts. In that context, the first promotion consisting of 40 young rural women benefited from BTS finance.

985. In 1999, BTS signed agreements, the first with the National Union of Tunisian Women (UNFT) in regard to girls graduating from the UNFT Modern Vocational Training Centre and the second with MAFF to support women benefiting from the support fund for women's productive activities.

V. Developing the qualifications of young rural women

Vocational training

986. In order to meet the new requirements of economic and social development, it was also necessary to adjust the vocational training system for rural girls within the framework of an approach which creates a greater linkage between training and economic and technical requirements.

987. A strategy to reform the young rural women's centres was placed on the agenda in 1992 and implemented during the Eighth Development Plan in order to ensure the advancement of young rural women by means of vocational training offering qualifications. Tangible results at both the qualitative and quantitative levels were recorded in regard to the organization and operation of such training.

988. The 13 young rural women's centres attached to the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment have succeeded in their efforts to revitalize and standardize the components of training. Today, they offer:

- Social training in the fields of education, family planning, health, environment and nutrition;
- Technical training in agriculture and handicrafts with a view to facilitating the integration of young women into the employment market;
- Modular training in the field of setting up enterprises in order to provide preparation in entrepreneurship and the establishment of microprojects.

989. An educational structure has been developed for young people in training and is aimed at those who are illiterate and at girls who were early school-leavers. This training structure has resulted in the production of training manuals and a variety of training aids for all of the modules offered. During the period 1992-1997, 4,000 young rural women benefited from such training. Partnership agreements have been signed with organizations and other bodies with a view to helping these young women to set up their own businesses. The cooperation agreement signed with the Tunisian Social Solidarity Union (UTSS) has enabled 60 young rural women to benefit from finance for the establishment

of microenterprises in the fields of livestock farming, market gardening and dressmaking.

990. The new training modules are made available to the various agents involved in training young rural women. The National Union of Tunisian Women, which runs 170 centres, has begun reforming its training system. It now has two experimental centres which offer training leading to qualifications in agriculture and handicrafts.

991. Within the framework of reform of the vocational training system, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment has been responsible for supervising the handicraft training centres since September 1999. Essentially for the benefit of young girls in rural and urban fringe areas and previously supervised by the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, such training will gain from the improvement in the standards of its various components that will occur as a result of the change in supervision with a view to ensuring that it leads to better qualifications.

992. In the agriculture sector, the vocational training centres and agricultural colleges offer technical training to girls from rural areas. Each year, about 100 girls pursue courses at the Young Women's Agricultural College in Soukra, which trains technical assistants, and in the centres at Tibar and Sidi Bouzid, which train skilled women labourers. The agricultural colleges at Bouchnik and Tibar very recently began to offer training for young women, in 1997 and 1995 respectively.

993. In the agricultural sector, the trend is either for a new type of training based on choice in accordance with the needs of men and women farmers or for technician retraining. In 1997, 2,700 women gained access to this type of training.

994. A number of agricultural training and retraining centres organize training activities and technical advice sessions for rural women and girls. In 1997, 288 women benefited from a total of 1,900 training days.

995. The women's extension programme developed as part of the project for the development of research and agricultural extension (a project of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) begun in 1992) offers technical advice, management activities and training in agricultural training centres or in sites specially arranged to meet women's needs or those of follow-up and assessment. It is aimed at three target groups: farmers' wives and women who run farms, farmers' daughters and female agricultural labourers.

996. Initially, three areas in the governorates of Zaghouan, Béja and Jendouba were selected to benefit from a pilot scheme begun during the 1992-1993 campaign. During the years 1993-1995, this programme was extended to five other governorates (Kairouan, Ariana, Médenine, Siliana and Sidi Bouzid). The methods adopted to assist women consist in:

- Organizing days for the dissemination of information and for practical demonstrations;

- Establishing demonstration plots;

- Organizing group activities on farms and individual visits to farms.

997. In addition to extension activities for women farmers, training sessions in methodology, communication techniques, agricultural technology and specific subjects are organized for female extension workers.

998. Television advertisements broadcast as part of information and agricultural extension campaigns are also targeted at women farmers.

VI. Positive action for rural women

999. In order to address the new needs of rural women with a view to promoting their integration into the dynamics of the national economy, the strategy for women in the Ninth Development Plan recommended the implementation of an overall intervention strategy, the main objective of which was to support women's productive activities by promoting microenterprises run by women and families in rural and urban fringe areas. A further objective was to carry out fresh studies in order to pinpoint with accuracy the conditions in which rural women live and carry out their productive activities.

VI.1. Studies and action research targeted at rural women

1000. Within the framework of the activities of the unit responsible for evaluating the impact of development projects, MAFF conducted a study on the female component of the integrated development project in the north-west, a study on the Ettadhaman-Douar Hicher project and a study on the impact of the projects of the National Solidarity Fund 26-26 on the conditions of women and families. The aim of these studies was to enhance the efficiency of efforts within the framework of development or social assistance projects with a view to achieving overall sustainable development that takes account of the immediate and strategic needs of men and women.

1001. With a view to furthering the understanding of rural women, in 1996, CREDIF published an in-depth report entitled Femmes rurales de Tunisie within the framework of the activities of the Women's Observatory.

1002. As part of the Ninth Plan and in accordance with a recommendation of the report Femmes rurales de Tunisie, CREDIT undertook to carry out the following studies:

- Le travail féminin et les stratégies familiales en milieu rural tunisien (March 1999), which formed part of the Dynamics-Population-Environment (DYPEN) Programme (based on a multidisciplinary approach) and aimed to study at close quarters the activity of rural women in four areas in northern and southern Tunisia (Bargou, Kroumirie, Menzel Habib and El Faour). On the one hand, this study explores the role of women in the productive strategies of agricultural households, particularly in the context of the economic restructuring process under way and, on the other, it identifies more effectively the contribution of women to social projects carried out by rural families

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and the impact which such projects have, especially on the functioning and reproduction of family systems of agriculture;

- Les femmes entrepreneurs agricoles et les femmes artisanes, the aim of which is to provide more information on the situation of both these groups and the problems which they face by engaging in action research with a variety of intermediate organizations (non-governmental organizations, development agencies and so on).

VI.2. The national plan of action for rural women

1003. On the basis of this assessment, the Ninth Development Plan incorporated into its strategy the implementation of a national plan of action for rural women, the aim of which is to enhance the integration of rural women into mainstream development by triggering a synergy between the different parties involved, adopting an integrated gender-based approach and achieving innovative activities.

1004. Formulated in 1998, the national plan of action for rural women is based on the six core issues of:

- Improving the living conditions of rural women;
- Developing their capabilities and skills;
- Achieving integration into the economic mainstream, particularly in the agricultural sector;
- Improving social and cultural training;
- Triggering the energy and drive of the community;
- Recognizing and promoting the contribution of rural women to development by devising statistical tools and suitable methodologies.

1005. The implementation of this plan of action is based on a participatory approach which integrates goal-driven planning into the framework of a regional and national consultation of national experts, officers of ministerial departments and non-government organizations and representatives of rural women (such as women leaders and female students from rural areas).

1006. Adopted in a ministerial council in December 1998, this plan of action was the subject of presidential directives aimed at ensuring its implementation in every region by way of:

1. Establishing in each governorate a regional committee chaired by the governor and tasked with drawing up, implementing and following up a plan of action adapted to suit the particular features of the region concerned;
2. Providing the human resources needed to implement the plan of action;

3. Starting a pilot experiment of establishing "centres of influence" in approximately 10 rural areas to serve as multipurpose and multiservice complexes for enlivening the communities and invigorating the social, economic and cultural life in those regions by specifically targeting women and families.

1007. MAFF supports the implementation of regional plans of action by providing training in goal-driven planning, in gender and development and in the participatory approach for the members of the regional committees responsible for the plan. During 1999, MAFF organized three sessions for each geographical area.

1008. This first plan of action for rural women will be implemented over the two remaining years of the Ninth Development Plan. Other plans of action integral to the next economic and social plans will continue the efforts for the advancement of rural women in Tunisia.

VI.3. Support mechanisms for female microenterprise

1009. In its strategy for the advancement of rural women, MAFF allocated over two-thirds of the funds acquired within the framework of international and bilateral cooperation to projects initiated by non-governmental organizations for the benefit of rural women and families.

1010. In accordance with the bilateral agreement between Tunisia and Sweden on the creation of the Fund for the Advancement of Women and Protection of the Environment in Tunisia, MAFF financed 21 projects between 1995 and 1997 at an overall cost of 2.5 million dinars, the implementation of which was placed in the hands of non-governmental organizations.

1011. The seven projects implemented in the first phase were specifically aimed at ensuring more effective vocational training for young rural women and furthering their economic integration (23 per cent of funds), helping to create permanent sources of income (19 per cent), improving living conditions for disadvantaged rural women and families in order to lessen the daily burden of time and effort involved in carrying water and gathering wood for cooking and heating purposes (21 per cent), bettering the image of women in society by strengthening information and communication activities, as well as activities to promote women's work in the cultural field (23 per cent), and boosting the performance of youngsters educated in rural areas by enhancing the school environment (5 per cent).

1012. In 1998, another 10 or so projects for impoverished women were started by non-governmental organizations (such as UTSS, UNFT, APEL, ENDA, ASAD and AFDD) at a cost of 233,000 dinars, which have essentially benefited the areas where the National Solidarity Fund 26-26 is active.

1013. Seven other projects piloted by non-governmental organizations were scheduled to begin in 1999 within the framework of the Swedish fund, as indicated by the table below.

Projects implemented with the framework of debt recycling between 1995 and 1998

Non-governmental organization	Project name
UNFT	Training - vocational integration (phase 1 and 2)
UNFT	Hand embroidery in Mahdia
UNFT	Improvement of living conditions for rural families in Oued El Abid
UNFT	Improvement of living conditions for rural families in Ouled Dhrifallah
UTSS	Integration of rural women in El Majra
ATLAS	Promotion of women's handicraft activities in Saada
FKDR	Improvement of living conditions for rural women in Bir Hedi
Voie de l'enfant	Construction and equipment of the social and educational centre in Oum El Abouab
CREDIF	Information-communication component
CREDIF	Cultural component
UTSS	Economic integration of the young rural women of Thibar
UTSS	Promotion of the mountain style of weaving
AFDD	Advancement of women and protection of the environment
APEL	Advancement of rural women in Atatfa
ATAS	Construction of the regional centre for the rehabilitation of the aurally impaired
ATM	Construction and equipment of a reception and advice centre for prevention of and help with child disability
AKAD*	Promotion of the Jbil locality
ASAD	Support for potential women jobseekers
MAFF	Audio-visual magazine
ENDA	Support for microenterprises in Hay Ettadhamen

* Kairouan Self-Development Association.

Source: MAFF.

Proposed programmes within the framework of debt recycling for the year 1999

Non-governmental organization	Project name
FTSS	Programme of income-generating activities for women
ENDA	Support for the establishment of women's microenterprises
UTSS	Programme for the promotion of women's productive activities
ASAD	Strengthening of women's jobs
ATPF*	Reproductive health in rural households
ADPM**	Strengthening of women's jobs
Ministry for Women and Family Affairs	Creation of centres of influence

* Tunisian Family Planning Association.

** Métline Development and Progress Association.

Source: MAFF.

1014. In order to support rural women in the creation of income-generating activities, MAFF has organized a fair on International Women's Day (8 March) every year since 1998 in order to help women producers to sell their merchandise. At the time, a website was set up as an experiment in order to give craftswomen access to electronic commerce. Training in how to set up and run microprojects is also organized for craftswomen during the period of the fair, as is training in the participatory approach for managerial staff in non-governmental organizations.

1015. On the basis of the experiments and studies conducted in the interests of rural women, MAFF has established a mechanism offering technical and financial support for female microenterprise, which will focus all of its efforts on disadvantaged women. In 1999, this mechanism commenced its activities, which are conducted in association with the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (ACDI), by launching the first experimental phase. An agreement with BTS had already been signed.

1016. Although it targets the urban, urban fringe and rural environments, this support mechanism for female microenterprise will undoubtedly benefit rural women.

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VI.4. The IEC strategy

1017. Rural women also have a significant place in the information and communication strategy followed by MAFF, which annually organizes a nationwide project as part of its strategy of support for disadvantaged groups.

1018. In 1997 and 1998, MAFF, in cooperation with the National Solidarity Fund 26-26, organized two seminars as part of a training course for 800 women members of the development committees in economically depressed areas. The aim of these seminars was to help the women concerned in their task of educating the women and families in their areas of activity by informing them of the rights and gains of women, raising their awareness of community action and teaching them how to generate sources of income and establish microprojects.

1019. The Ministry is helping to improve the image of rural women. As a result of the Festival of Rural Women organized in 1995 in the interests of approximately 100 productive and creative women from all over Tunisia, the public acquired a greater appreciation of the contribution made by rural women to preserving the cultural heritage of their regions and to the dynamics of social and economic development in the rural world. The variety of events offered on this occasion (a seminar, an exhibition of women's skills and cultural activities) afforded high visibility to the multiple aspects of the contribution of rural women.

1020. In cooperation with other institutions (the National Office of Family Planning, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Solidarity Fund and so on), MAFF is helping to educate rural women in the field of legal matters.

Prospects

1021. The quality of rural life has conspicuously improved as a result of the synergy created by the combination of the policy of regional development, the overall sectoral policies and the considerable efforts of the National Solidarity Fund and the Tunisian Solidarity Bank.

1022. The creation of new mechanisms and the launch of a national plan of action focused on regional plans of action for rural women provide a combination which opens up real prospects for self-development and for the improvement of living conditions, production and rural women's access to different services, including employment and production support services.

1023. In rural areas, considerable numbers of women are engaged in productive activities in the fields of agriculture, crafts or industry, both within the framework of family livelihoods and as wage-earners. Entire sectors of agricultural production are predominantly based on women's labour and the income of a significant proportion of the rural population is closely dependent on the productive activity of women.

1024. Since the Eighth Plan, the social and economic advancement of women and the strengthening of family livelihoods in rural areas have formed part of the objectives of development policies, resulting in the implementation of various projects aimed at improving the level of education and technical advancement of rural women and at strengthening their production capacities.

Article 15: Equality before the law

> "1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.
>
> "2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.
>
> "3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.
>
> "4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile."

I. Absolute equality in matters of legal capacity

1025. Since independence, there has been no difference between men and women in matters of legal capacity pursuant to article 7 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts. Men and women both attain majority at the age of 20 years. Courts afford the same treatment to all those under their jurisdiction, whether men or women. Similarly, no distinction is made between men and women in regard to testifying before the courts.

1026. Tunisian legislation accords to women, whatever their civil status, and on equal terms with men, the right to conclude contracts in their own name, dispose of their property (art. 7 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts), serve as the administrator of an estate and institute proceedings before any court, including the Administrative Court.

1027. In accordance with article 27 of the Code of Personal Status, at the age of 20, a child (whether male or female) may exercise his or her full rights, assume his or her responsibilities and enjoy the same capacity as men to institute proceedings in regard to matters of personal status, civil and commercial acts and political rights, with no limit, except in the cases of legal incapacity provided for by law and applicable to men and women without distinction.

1028. Tunisian legislation provides for two possible situations in which men and women may attain majority before the age of 20:

* Pursuant to a legal act to enable him or her to pursue a business or occupation (art. 170 of the Personal Status Code) for exceptional reasons at the discretion of the judge (arts. 11 and 12 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts);

* Marriage at the age of 17 (the legal age for marriage) enables young male or female minors automatically to attain majority pursuant to new article 153 of the Personal Status Code, as amended by the Act of 12 July 1993. This emancipation, however, concerns civil status and civil and commercial acts in accordance with new article 153, which provides that: "Any person who has not attained the majority of 20 years of age shall be deemed incompetent by reason of minority. A minor over the age of 17 shall become adult by marriage in regard to personal status and the management of his or her civil and commercial affairs."

1029. New article 153 undoubtedly applies without distinction to both sexes, although in reality it relates essentially to women, since the legal age for marriage as stipulated in the Personal Status Code is 17 for young women and 20 for young men (art. 5). In 1994, the average age of marriage for women on a nationwide scale was 27. The marriage of female minors is now an annually falling trend in all environments.

1030. With a view to strengthening the principle of equality between men and women in terms of both rights and duties, a new law was promulgated on 7 February 2000, namely Act No. 2000-17, repealing the provisions of article 831, article 1481, paragraph 2, and article 1524, paragraph 2, of the Code of Obligations and Contracts. Those provisions required the prior authorization of a husband for his wife to work, as well as his authorization for bail and, in the case of bail, for his wife to appear in court.

II. Inadmissibility of discrimination in matters of access to judicial office

1031. Since 1992, the presence of women has strengthened in the various bodies of the judicial apparatus and in the decision-making positions in particular. The proportion of women magistrates thus rose from 22.7 per cent in 1992 to over 24 per cent in 1998.

1032. The first woman presiding judge of court was appointed in 1993. In 1998, several women held the positions of deputy presiding judge of court, presiding judge of the court of first instance, Director-General of the Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies, Director of Civil Affairs and Director of Criminal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. Women also hold the office of family magistrate or children's magistrate, which were established in 1993 and 1996 respectively. In March 2000, a woman magistrate was promoted for the first time to the office of chief justice of a court of appeal.

1033. Women also perform all the functions of representatives of the law. In 1998, they accounted for 21.6 per cent of all lawyers (compared with 10 per cent in 1992). Moreover, they are gradually gaining access to the other positions which continue to be dominated by their male colleagues, as the following table indicates:

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Statistics on the representatives of the law in 1998

Representatives of the law	Total males	Per cent	Total females	Per cent	Overall total	Per cent
Notaries	521	95	29	5	550	100
Bailiffs	645	95	35	5	680	100
Lawyers	2 176	78.4	600	21.6	2 776	100
Legal experts	1 745	98	42	2	1 787	100
Sworn enterprises	44	84	8	16	52	100

1034. In 1998, a woman, currently a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), was appointed as chief justice of the Court of Audit for the first time, one of the highest jurisdictional offices in the country.

III. Right of women to elect their domicile

1035. In view of the sacred value of marital and family ties in Tunisian culture, the Code of Personal Status decreed the cohabitation of spouses as a fundamental principle of the marriage contract. Article 23 of the Personal Status Code, which constitutes the Tunisian family charter, clearly states that spouses should fulfil their conjugal duties in accordance with ways and customs. Consequently, the duty of cohabitation is mutually incumbent on both spouses.

1036. Tunisian jurisprudence has laid down this principle in a number of divorce orders pronounced against husband or wife, as the case may be, without consequent distinction as to the failure to comply with this obligation.

1037. Anxious to preserve the higher interests of the child, the Tunisian legislator laid down provisions guaranteeing the exercise of parental prerogatives towards the child on the basis of the latter's right to full enjoyment of the care and psychological and emotional supervision of both parents. As much is evident in article 61 of the Personal Status Code, pursuant to which a mother is stripped of her right to custody if she "moves far enough away to preclude the guardian from fulfilment of his duty towards his ward." Similarly, the judge may, pursuant to new article 67 of the Personal Status Code, withdraw guardianship from the father in favour of the mother if he "abandons his home and has no known address" or "for any other reason likely to prejudice the interests of the child".

1038. Act 93-74 of 12 July 1993 amending certain articles of the Personal Status Code thus introduces a new balance between both spouses in matters of conjugal and parental rights and duties, particularly those relating to the right to elect a domicile.

1039. In any normal marital relationship, spouses may jointly agree, whether in their economic interests or for reasons of work, to elect separate domiciles for a fixed period in different countries or in distant towns. In the event of dispute, however, articles 23 and 61 may be invoked to the detriment of either the husband and the wife. Pursuant to article 32 of the Personal Status Code, a spouse may seek a divorce on the grounds of harm suffered.

1040. In regard to a mixed marriage between a Tunisian woman and an alien, the Code of Private International Law, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 98-97 of 27 November 1998, established the principle of equality in matters of personal status, particularly concerning the choice of the marital home, in accordance with articles 47, 48 and 49, which provide that, in the event of the different nationality of the spouses, the law applicable is that of:

- Their most recent joint domicile or, failing that, lex fori in matters of "the respective obligations of the spouses (art. 47), divorce or legal separation";
- The first joint domicile, where applicable, or the law of the place where the marriage contract was concluded, in regard to the type of matrimonial property regime (art. 48).

1041. In the event of divorce proceedings, the law applicable is no longer that applicable to the husband at the time when the marriage was concluded but that of the most recent marital home, or failing that, lex fori.

Article 16: Matrimonial and family law

> "1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:
>
> "(a) The same right to enter into marriage;
>
> "(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
>
> "(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
>
> "(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
>
> "(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise those rights;

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"(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

"(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

"(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

"2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory."

I. Equality and partnership within the family

1042. The Personal Status Code organizes the Tunisian family on the basis of the legal equality of men and women and the sound moral footing of the marital relationship within the family and society by providing in particular for:

- The abolition of polygamy (failure to comply with this provision is punishable by law as a criminal offence);
- The institution of legal divorce, the prohibition of repudiation and the granting of divorce rights to both spouses;
- Limitation of the legal marriageable age for a young woman to 17, with the proviso of her consent;
- The capacity of women to institute legal proceedings and be summoned in their own name, with the same opportunities of access to legal services as men;
- The award to the mother, in the event of the father's death, of the right of guardianship of her minor children;
- The institution, in matters of inheritance, of a mandatory bequest in favour of the daughter's children if she should predecease her father;
- Statutory reversion, whereby an only daughter inherits her parents' estate in its entirety.

1043. The Personal Status Code has been amended several times in order to take into account the development of Tunisian society. The amendments introduced in 1993 radically altered the nature of marital and family relationships by establishing more soundly the principle of the equality of men and women and by strengthening the foundations for the democratic management of family matters.

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1044. Pursuant to Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 amending the Personal Status Code, the rights and duties of spouses within the family were significantly modified on the basis of establishing the principles of equality and shared responsibility. The position accorded to a wife within the family has improved in the sense that she is increasingly accorded the right to take part in the decision-making concerning the management of children and the household.

1045. The establishment of new rights for wives and mothers in the management of family affairs and the promotion of a family environment based on mutual help and solidarity between the parents on the one hand and the different generations on the other are measures which have largely helped to reaffirm family ties.

1. The relationship of the couple: a mutual commitment

1046. In former article 2 on the breach of promise of marriage and former article 8 on dissolution of the marriage contract, the Personal Status Code provided that only the fiancé or the husband had the right to the restitution of any gifts given to the fiancée or wife. As a result of the social and cultural development of Tunisian society, however, any woman who works now generally has her own independent means and is thus also in a position to offer gifts to her husband or future husband. It is therefore natural that she should enjoy the same right to restitution as a fiancé or husband in the event that the promise or contract of marriage is breached.

1047. Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 amended the above two articles in order to achieve the equality of men and women in this matter by stipulating:

Article 2 (new): "Each of the two fiancés shall have the right to the restitution of gifts given to the other except in the case of breach of promise or a stipulation to the contrary."

Article 28 (new): "If the marriage is dissolved before its consummation for a reason imputable to one of the spouses, the gifts given by either spouse after the marriage has taken place shall be returned in their current state, whether altered or not. No restitution shall be made after the consummation of the marriage."

1048. These amendments clearly establish the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination between men and women during the period preceding the consummation of the marriage, thus paving the way for equality in the family.

2. Annulment of the provision concerning legal appraisal of the dowry

1049. Article 3 of the Personal Status Code lists "the fixing of a dowry for the woman" as one of the conditions for the validity of the marriage contract.

1050. Under former article 12 of the Personal Status Code, it was essential that the dowry should consist of a substantial amount for which there was no maximum limit. New article 12 annulled this provision with a view to eliminating any hint of an unprincipled attitude towards women. New article 12 states that "the dowry may consist of any lawful property having monetary value. It shall belong to the wife." The dowry no longer represents a material condition of marriage but rather a psychological one, a demonstration of a man's love for his wife.

1051. From the social point of view, the dowry is increasingly less likely to be perceived as a condition for marriage; to a growing extent, it is imbued in practice with a symbolic value. Most marriage contracts refer to a symbolic dowry of "five dinars for the bride" (approximately US$5), as encouraged by the public authorities.

3. Emancipation of a minor bride by marriage

1052. Pursuant to article 5 of the Personal Status Code, the legal age for marriage is 17 for young women and 20 for young men, while article 153 of the Code states that "any person who has not attained the majority of 20 years of age shall be deemed incompetent by reason of minority".

1053. Anxious to place spouses on an equal footing in matters of legal capacity, the legislator introduced a new provision in article 153 pursuant to which "the marriage of a minor over the age of 17 shall emancipate him or her in regard to civil status and civil and commercial acts".

1054. New article 153 stipulates that: "Any person who has not attained the majority of 20 years of age shall be deemed incompetent by reason of minority. A minor over the age of 17 shall become adult by marriage in regard to personal status and the management of his or her civil and commercial affairs."

1055. A minor bride may therefore personally manage her civil and commercial affairs without her husband having any right of say over this personal aspect of her life.

II. Greater balance in the rights and duties of spouses

1056. Under former article 23 of the Personal Status Code, the relationship between the couple was an unequal one governed by the presumed hierarchical superiority of the husband, whose task it was to take the decisions, and the inferiority of the wife, who had no option but to carry out the choices made by her husband and to show him obedience. It provided that:

> "A husband shall be considerate of his wife and maintain good relations with her. He shall avoid causing her harm. He shall meet the expenses of the marriage and provide for the needs of his wife and their children to the extent of his abilities and in accordance with the status of the wife. The wife shall contribute to the expenses of the marriage if she has property. The wife shall respect the prerogatives of the husband as the head of the household and, to that extent, shall owe him obedience. The wife shall fulfil her conjugal duties in conformity with usage and custom."

1057. Pursuant to the reform of the Personal Status Code in accordance with Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993, a new view of the relationship between spouses was established. It is now a matter of cooperation in conducting the affairs of the household and children.

New article 23 provides that:

> "Each of the spouses shall be considerate of, maintain good relations with and avoid causing injury to the other. Both spouses shall fulfil their conjugal duties in conformity with usage and custom.
>
> "They shall cooperate in managing the family's affairs, the proper education of their children and the conduct of their affairs, including education, travel and financial transactions.
>
> "The husband, as head of the family, should provide for the needs of his wife and children to the extent of his means and in accordance with their status in terms of household needs.
>
> "The wife shall contribute to the family's expenses if she has property."

1058. As a consequence of the social changes, in particular the access of women to work and to economic resources, the majority of Tunisian families, which is to say over 60 per cent, are now nuclear families (in 1956, 60 per cent were extended families).

II.1. Obligation of spouses to cooperate

1059. The institution of an obligation for spouses to cooperate created a sounder moral footing for the new married relationship and set new legal criteria for that relationship by creating the conditions for a family and social environment that was more respectful of human rights, particularly those concerning women and children.

1060. The idea of the partnership and shared responsibility of spouses is making headway, thus progressively enabling the removal of unequal provisions which are the last surviving vestiges of the patriarchal system. The decree of 1956 on the matrimonial status of families produced by mixed marriages stipulated that the applicable law governing married relationships was that applicable to the husband, thus favouring him on the basis of sex discrimination.

1061. The Code of International Private Law, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 98-97 of 27 November 1998, provides in article 47 concerning the respective obligations of spouses, article 48 concerning the matrimonial property regime and article 49 concerning divorce that the law applicable is now that of the country of the most recent conjugal home, or failing that, lex fori (the law of the country where any divorce proceedings are instituted), thus laying down the principle of absolute equality between the spouses in matters of personal status and the choice of the conjugal home.

II.2. Recognition of the economic role of the wife within the family

1062. The amendment of article 23 introduces a major innovation, namely the obligation of the wife to contribute to the expenses of the family, which stems from the recognition of the new economic role of women. A wife now plays an active role within the family as a generator of economic resources.

1063. The two spouses, however, do not have the same economic duties. If the husband continues to be the main economic provider, the financial obligation is only binding on the wife if she has her own resources. This situation is justified by the country's economic realities which, according to the national census of 1994, show that the economically active female population constitutes only 24 per cent of the total economically active population.

1064. Nevertheless, the role of women in the development of the family's economic resources is being increasingly felt in the collective consciousness.

1065. The role of head of household is now also recognized by society to apply to single mothers in that position, who benefit from almost 52 per cent of the social assistance granted by the National Fund for Aid to Needy Families.

III. Elimination of the concept of submission

1066. Pursuant to former article 23, paragraph 3, a wife was obliged to respect the prerogatives of her husband and to obey him in his position as head of family. In the new article, this provision has been abrogated.

1067. The relationship of man and wife within marriage is no longer based on hierarchy or power.

1068. Even where a husband retains his position as head of household, no domination is now implied, as the relationship is no longer connected with the requirement for submission, which has been eliminated, but with the economic role of the husband, who must "provide for the needs of his wife and children to the extent of his means". The position of head of household is no longer a right granted to a husband to the detriment of his wife but an economic function and a responsibility linked to the duty incumbent on him to provide for the needs of his wife and children.

III.1. The establishment of mutual respect between spouses

1069. Former article 23 on the one hand required that the husband should "be considerate of his wife and avoid causing her injury" and on the other that the wife should obey him and "fulfil her conjugal duties in conformity with usage and custom."

1070. The reform of this article pursuant to Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 established a new form of relations based on reciprocal treatment. Both spouses are now under mutual obligation to be equally considerate of and avoid causing injury to the other and to fulfil their conjugal duties in conformity with usage and custom.

1071. A wife is no longer regarded as the property of her husband who has the duty of protection. Instead, she has full legal status with the same rights and duties as her spouse in regard to respect for dignity, affection and proper treatment. Over and above the husband's attitude towards his wife, the entire basis of the married relationship is thus fundamentally altered.

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III.2. The imprescriptible right of the wife to life and to physical integrity

1072. The establishment of the need for reciprocal treatment between spouses is testimony to the fact that the law recognizes the emergence of the wife's individuality as a human being who, as such, has her own rights, a notion which stems from her matrimonial status.

1073. In the same vein, the Criminal Code, pursuant to the reform of 1993, accords to the wife the imprescriptible right to life as an individual and to respect for her physical integrity, an imprescriptible right inherent to the human being. This recognition is illustrated by the repeal of article 207, which granted the benefit of attenuating circumstances to any husband who murdered his wife caught in flagrante delicto of adultery. This crime is now characterized as voluntary manslaughter and the perpetrator is subject to a penalty of life imprisonment.

1074. The husband no longer has a right of life or death over his wife, whose right to life is reinstated, being an inalienable right inherent to the human being, irrespective of the intentional nature of his or her conduct.

1075. Equality of the sexes before criminal law in regard to crimes of passion has been introduced and contributes substantially to establishing in the collective consciousness the principle of the individual integrity of women, irrespective of their matrimonial status.

1076. In close correlation, in matters of violence towards a spouse, Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 amending article 218 of the Penal Code deems the marital bond to be an aggravating circumstance which warrants the imposition of a heavier penalty, whereas marital violence was previously subject only to the usual penalty for assault.

1077. Marital violence is now subject to a penalty of imprisonment which is doubled to two years and a fine of 2,000 dinars, whereas any act of violence or assault is subject only to a penalty of imprisonment for one year and a fine of 1,000 dinars. New article 218 provides that:

> "Any individual who wilfully commits assault or battery or any other act of violence or assault which is not covered by the provisions of article 319 shall be punished by imprisonment of one year and a fine of one thousand (1,000) dinars. If the perpetrator of the assault is a descendant or spouse of the victim, the penalty shall be imprisonment of two years and a fine of two thousand (2,000) dinars. If there was premeditation, the penalty shall be imprisonment of three years and a fine of three thousand (3,000) dinars.
>
> "Withdrawal of the case by a victim who is an ascendant or spouse shall halt any proceedings, trial or enforcement of penalty. Attempted assault shall be punishable."

Hence, in matters of conjugal violence, the legislative policy shifts between augmentation of the penalty and pardon of the spouse.

IV. Parental prerogatives: cooperation for the proper education of children

1078. Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 encouraged a balance of sorts between the father and mother in matters of parental prerogatives. To some extent, the rights and duties of parents are different and the difference may even warrant positive discrimination in favour of the female sex, as is the case in regard to the award of maintenance.

1079. New article 23 of the Personal Status Code stipulates that both spouses "shall cooperate in managing the family's affairs, the proper education of their children and the conduct of their affairs, including education, travel and financial transactions".

The wording of former article 23 did not permit the mother to draw on her child's bank accounts or to intervene in decisions concerning the choices in regard to his or her education or travel. Paragraph 3 of new article 23 establishes that parents share responsibility in that connection.

IV.1. Association of the mother in decisions concerning the marriage of a minor

1080. Former article 6 of the Personal Status Code provided that the marriage of a minor was subject to the authorization of his or her guardian. As the guardian was the father or his representative, the mother had no right to intervene in any decision concerning the marriage of her minor child. The amendment of article 6 brought an end to this inequality. Hence, in accordance with new article 6 of the Personal Status Code, the mother has the same right as the guardian to authorize the marriage of her child. Joint parental authority has been established in this regard, thus serving the interests of the minor, whose marriage is no longer dependent on the wishes of one parent which may be detrimental to him or her and of which girls were generally the victims. New article 6 stipulates that: "The marriage of a minor shall be subject to the consent of his or her guardian, as well as that of the mother. If the guardian or mother refuses consent and the minor continues to desire the marriage, the matter shall be brought before a magistrate. The judgement authorizing the marriage shall not be subject to appeal."

IV.2. Equal responsibility of parents for the criminal acts of their children

1081. Formerly, the father alone had civil responsibility for an act committed by his minor child that caused injury to others and the mother would only assume such responsibility following the death of her husband. Since the reform of the Code of Obligations and Contracts of 9 November 1996, however, the mother has been jointly responsible with the father for any intentional act of her child. This is evidently consistent with the duty of cooperation by which they are bound and with the parental authority which they jointly exercise in accordance with article 23. Article 93 bis stipulates that: "The father and mother shall be jointly responsible for the prejudicial act of their child, provided that he resides with them."

IV.3. Support awarded to maternal ascendants

1082. The right to support was previously restricted to paternal ascendants and grandparents. Since the reform of 12 July 1993, however, this right to support has been extended to maternal grandparents. New article 43 provides that:

> "The following persons shall be entitled to support:
>
> "(a) Fathers, mothers, paternal grandparents of whatever degree and maternal grandparents of the first degree;
>
> "(b) Descendants of whatever degree."

1083. On a reciprocal basis, new article 44 defining the duties of well-to-do children of both sexes in regard to their ascendants also mentions maternal grandparents of the first degree as beneficiary relatives in addition to mothers, fathers and paternal grandparents of whatever degree.

V. Equality of spouses in matters of choice and of family planning

1084. In Tunisia, spouses have enjoyed equality in regard to freely choosing the number and spacing of their children since the early 1970s.

1085. As a result of favourable legislation and extensive awareness-raising activities, family planning is now well established in the collective consciousness as a right inherent to the right to health.

1086. Specific information, education and communication programmes are implemented in the furthermost rural regions covered by the activities of the National Solidarity Fund with a view to establishing family planning practices. Led by young rural women, these activities are targeted at both men and women.

VI. Respective rights in matters of property and succession

VI.1. The right of women to own, acquire, retain and dispose of property

1087. Neither the Code of Obligations and Contracts nor the Property Code make any sex-related distinction in regard to the possession, acquisition, management or disposal of property.

1088. Under article 24 of the Personal Status Code concerning the separation of property owned by married couples, women dispose of property which they acquire during the marriage under the same conditions as their husbands.

1089. Following the decisions adopted in a select council of ministers presided over by the Head of State which met to discuss the national plan of action for the family on 5 April 1996, the national social security funds were invited, in a circular dated 9 May 1996, to permit spouses to enter into loan agreements, each on their own individual account, for the acquisition of a single family home, the aim being to encourage couples to choose the regime of the joint estate.

1090. In order to encourage access to property by married women, the legislator, on the instigation of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, promulgated a law organizing the regime of the joint estate of husband and wife in accordance with the new relations of shared responsibility and partnership governing the couple, as stipulated in new article 23 of the Personal Status Code.

VI.2. The law on the joint estate of husband and wife

1091. Act No. 98-91 of 9 November 1998 concerning the joint estate of husband and wife provides as follows:

> "Article 1: The regime of the joint estate is an optional regime which the spouses may choose at the time of the marriage contract or at a subsequent date. The aim of this regime is to ensure that the spouses have joint ownership of any property or group of properties which are specifically intended for the family's own use.
>
> "Article 2: When the spouses declare that they have chosen the regime of the joint estate they shall be subject to the provisions of this Act. They shall be responsible, however, for any agreement to increase the extent of the joint estate provided that, in so doing, it is explicitly mentioned."

1092. The regime of the joint estate is an optional regime. In addition, it does not apply to the procedure of succession. Article 3 states that this regime "applies without prejudice to the rules on succession".

1093. Article 7 of the Act further states that "where a marriage is concluded without reference to the choice of the spouses concerning the matrimonial property regime, it shall be presumed that the regime of the separate estate has been chosen".

1094. This Act, which, for the first time in Tunisian positive law established a regime for the joint estate of husband and wife, thereby departing from the principal legal regime of the separate estate, is essentially characterized by its optional and voluntary aspect, both in terms of the time when this regime is chosen (spouses can make their choice on conclusion of the contract of marriage or at a subsequent date) and in terms of the property which may be included within this choice (immovable property only or all movable and immovable property). It is also characterized by the fact that the regime can be dissolved with the explicit agreement of both parties.

1095. This Act is part of the civilizing approach of the Tunisian legislator to matters of family policy, which establishes the principle of partnership between spouses. Since the Act of 12 July 1993 amending the Personal Status Code (art. 23), spouses have been under obligation to cooperate with one another for the proper management of their household affairs and to contribute to the family's expenses with their own resources (particularly in the case of the wife). Moreover, they are also normally required to cooperate equally in regard to finance and immovable property. This is precisely the goal intended and achieved by the Act of 30 November 1998, article 1, paragraph 2, of which states that: "The aim of this regime is to ensure that the spouses have joint ownership of any property or a group of properties which are specifically intended for the family's own use."

1096. The law on the joint estate of husband and wife is based on an innovative approach and introduces new legal and social standards concerning access to property.

VII. Equality in regard to divorce

1097. In 1956, the Personal Status Code instituted legal divorce (art. 30) and the equality of spouses in regard to seeking divorce (art. 31).

1098. Spouses have full freedom in regard to divorce. They have a choice between three forms of divorce: divorce by mutual consent, divorce on the grounds of injury and divorce on the grounds of incompatibility.

1099. In the event of divorce proceedings and failure of the attempt to achieve reconciliation which the judge is required to make in accordance with article 31 of the Personal Status Code, urgent measures concerning maintenance are ordered by the judge, who also fixes the amount of the maintenance payments.

1100. In the event of divorce, the court fixes, where necessary, the amount of maintenance payable to the wife in accordance with Act No. 81-7 of 18 February 1981 (art. 53 *bis*) and delivers a ruling on the urgent measures which were the subject of the order made by the judge who attempted to achieve reconciliation. The provisions of the divorce order concerning maintenance and divorce payments may give rise to criminal prosecutions for family abandonment in accordance with article 53 *bis*.

VII.1. Creation of the office of the family magistrate

1102. Anxious to protect the respective rights of spouses and wishing to provide the family with a last resort, the legislator, pursuant to the reform of 1993, chose to entrust this type of matter to a magistrate specializing in personal status by creating the office of the "family magistrate".

1103. The family magistrate is chosen by the presiding judge of the court in order to carry out the tasks of attempting reconciliation, taking urgent measures and ensuring that the legal proceedings run smoothly.

VII.2. Deterrent measures to ensure correct legal proceedings

1104. In order to guarantee the correctness of legal proceedings, Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 amending articles 6, 32 and 67 of the Personal Status Code instituted new deterrent measures to ensure better protection of women's rights in the event of divorce proceedings and divorce.

1105. The judge must personally ensure that notifications concerning the progress of the proceedings reach the spouses concerned and re-examine the case should the defendant fail to appear. This provision is aimed at eliminating any possibility of "divorce by default", in particular by guaranteeing the right of

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the wife to be informed of the proceedings under way. New article 32 provides that:

> "If the defendant fails to appear and has not been personally notified, the family magistrate shall postpone consideration of the matter to a later hearing and shall request the assistance of such other person as he deems appropriate with a view to personally notifying the party concerned or determining his actual domicile in order to bring him before the court."

1106. The newly introduced article 32 bis of the Personal Status Code discourages any attempt to impede legal divorce proceedings, of which women are generally the victims, by punishing the act of withholding a summons. Article 32 bis provides that: "A spouse employing fraudulent misrepresentation to prevent notification of the other spouse shall be subject to a penalty of imprisonment for one year."

VII.3. Three attempts at reconciliation where minor children are involved

1107. Where one or more minor children are involved, the family magistrate, in accordance with new article 32, is required to hold "three reconciliation hearings, with an interval of at least 30 days between hearings. During this period, the magistrate shall make every effort to achieve reconciliation. To that end, he may call on the services of such person as he deems appropriate." Clearly concerned to protect minor children and their rights to a balanced family life, the law permits the family magistrate to seek the assistance of a family mediator.

VII.4. The maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund

1108. Pursuant to article 53 bis of the Personal Status Code as amended by Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993:

> "Any person having been ordered to pay maintenance or a divorce allowance who voluntarily allows a month to elapse without making the payment imposed on him shall be punished by imprisonment of three months to one year and a fine of one hundred (100) to one thousand (1,000) dinars. Payment shall terminate the proceedings, trial or execution of the penalty.
>
> "The maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund shall, in the circumstances prescribed by the law establishing the fund, pay the maintenance or divorce allowance stipulated in the final judgements awarded in favour of divorced women and children born of their union with the debtors which have not been executed owing to the delay of the debtors. The guarantee fund shall assume the rights of judgement beneficiaries for recovery of the sums which it paid."

1109. Established pursuant to Act No. 93-65 of 5 July 1993, the maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund is responsible for "payment of the amounts of maintenance or allowance which were the subject of final judgements and which could not be executed in favour of divorced women and their children by the

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judgement debtor in view of his delinquency, to be made within 15 days of the date of submission of the application in fulfilment of the legal conditions." (art. 2). Moreover, "the fund shall assume the rights of those entitled to the maintenance or allowance with respect to the persons owing the amounts due under a judgement. It shall have the power to institute recovery proceedings for those sums up to the amount it has paid". (art. 3) (see arts. 1, 2, 3 and 13).

1110. After three years of operation, the running of the maintenance and divorce allowance guarantee fund was examined on 11 August 1997 by a select council of ministers presided over by the Head of State, which decided that:

* The fund should pay without interruption the amounts due to beneficiaries, except in extreme cases where recovery proves impossible;

* In instituting court proceedings for confirmation of the offence of family abandonment, the fund should replace the beneficiaries (who are no longer required to provide the fund on a regular three-monthly basis with a court affidavit confirming such offence);

* An executive officer should be entrusted with the task of following up the activities of the fund in each regional office of the National Social Security Fund.

In accordance with these decisions, the following texts appeared in succession:

- Circular No. 17 of 24 September 1997 from the Minister of Social Affairs addressed to the regional offices of the National Social Security Fund;

- Circular of the Ministries of Justice and Social Affairs of 24 November 1997;

- Decree No. 671/98 of 19 March 1998 amending the Decree of 9 August 1993.

1111. In accordance with these decisions, a network of 23 regional coordinators was established in order to carry out close follow-up of the women beneficiaries of the Fund.

1112. The establishment of this Fund was an important innovation which demonstrates the concern of the State and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali personally to preserve the rights of mothers and children over and above the trials and tribulations which may confront any family.

VIII. Rights and duties in matters of guardianship

VIII.1. Right of say in the affairs of a child in custody

1113. A divorced mother who failed to win custody of her child previously had no right of say over his affairs and the management of his life. In accordance with article 60 of the Personal Status Code, this right was accorded only to the father or to another guardian. In view of its discriminatory character and taking into account the shared responsibility of the couple, as well as the interests of strengthening the mechanisms for following up the affairs of children, this article was amended. Pursuant to Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993, new article 60 accorded this right to the mother by providing that:

> "The father, the guardian and the mother of the child may have a right of say over his affairs, provide for his education and send him to educational establishments, although the child may not stay overnight with anyone other than the person who has custody of him, subject, in all cases, to a decision of the judge to the contrary in the interests of the child."

VIII.2. Guardianship of children: new attributions of the mother

1114. In regard to the attributions of guardianship, the new texts tend to lay down the principle of reciprocity between men and women in an attempt to create a greater balance between their mutual prerogatives.

1115. In 1981, the legislator granted mothers the right of guardianship over their minor children in the event of the father's death. However, in the case of divorce, even where the mother had custody of her children, guardianship reverted entirely to the father.

1116. New article 67, as amended by Act No. 93-74 of 12 July 1993 granted a mother who has custody of her child "the prerogatives of guardianship with respect to the travel and education of the child and the management of his or her financial accounts". The magistrate may also entrust her with the attributes of guardian "if the guardian is unable to exercise guardianship, abuses his responsibility, neglects to fulfil appropriately the obligations arising from his responsibility or is absent from his domicile or is without a known address, or for any reason prejudicing the interests of the child."

1117. New article 67 also provides that: "If a marriage is dissolved by death, custody shall be granted to the surviving parent. If a marriage is dissolved during the lifetime of the spouse, custody shall be granted to either of them or to a third party. The decision shall be at the discretion of the magistrate, taking into account the interests of the child. Should custody be granted to the mother, she shall enjoy all the prerogatives of guardianship with respect to the travel and education of the child and management of his or her financial accounts. The magistrate may grant the attributes of guardianship to the mother who has custody of the child if the guardian is unable to exercise guardianship, abuses his responsibility, neglects to fulfil appropriately the obligations arising from his responsibility or is absent from his domicile and is without a known address, or for any reason prejudicing the interests of the child."

1118. In order to give effect to this article, particularly in regard to the management of financial accounts and travel (issuance of passports), the public authorities took the initiative by means of Circular No. 7/97 of 3 September 1997, signed by the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Education, as well as by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to call on their departments to maintain strict application of the law.

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1119. Even if the rights of parents remain unequal with respect to guardianship, the father still enjoys no absolute right in the matter. Concerned to preserve the imprescriptible right of the child to a good education and to the care of both parents, the legislator imposed residence restrictions on both the mother and the father in the event of divorce. Accordingly, if the mother has custody of the child and engages in travel which is likely to compromise the father's right to guardianship, she may have the custody of the child withdrawn from her (art. 61 of the Personal Status Code). In the same connection, if it should occur that the father has no known address, he may have his guardianship withdrawn by the magistrate (new art. 67 of the Personal Status Code).

IX. Extramarital relations

1120. Free union is legally prohibited in Tunisia and gives rise to penalties and consequences in law in that, being likened to customary marriage (*'urf*), it is deemed to promote de facto polygamy.

1121. Births outside wedlock, however, have always received attention from the State, which devotes specific programmes to such cases, primarily with a view to protecting children and enshrining the right to life. The National Institute for Child Protection is actively engaged in efforts to those ends, as are various charitable associations.

1122. Promulgated in 1996, the Child Protection Code affirmed the right of children to a first name and a patronymic name, irrespective of the marital status of their parents. Act No. 98-75 of 28 October 1998 expressly reaffirmed this right by specifying the measures to be taken in the event that a child's parentage is unknown.

Descent: new gains for mothers

1123. In matters of descent, fathers and mothers were previously far from being on an equal footing, whether in regard to the acknowledgement of paternity or the attribution of a patronymic name. Only the father was able to establish his paternity of the child by his own acknowledgement or by testimony. The mother, meanwhile, was at the mercy of a false testimony or false acknowledgement by the father. Act No. 98-75 of 28 October 1998 concerning the attribution of a patronymic name to abandoned children or children of unknown descent restored the balance between men and women by granting new rights to mothers:

- It is now entirely legitimate for a mother to give her patronymic name to her minor child of unknown descent. In the eyes of the law, she is even obliged to do so, as article 1 of the Act provides that: "A mother who has custody of her minor child whose descent is unknown must attribute to him a first name and a patronymic name or request authorization for the same in accordance with the provisions regulating civil status."

- If the father shirks his duties towards his child, a mother may now prove the paternity of her child by resorting to genetic testing.

1124. By resorting to this scientific method, which is now legal, a mother may have the paternity of her child recognized and be protected from false acknowledgements or testimonies.

Prospects

1125. The status of women within the family is constantly and significantly evolving as a result of the legislative reforms of July 1993 and the laws promulgated in 1998. In that connection, the rights of women have been considerably strengthened (even when they are still minors) as mothers, wives and individuals. Their participation in decision-making has also been consolidated in marriage and after divorce, as the case may be.

1126. The Tunisian legislator is driven by the constant wish to protect the rights and gains of women, a wish which stems from the concern to ensure that the reforms undertaken remain long-lived in order to prepare the ground, at a later stage, for further new reforms.

CONCLUSION

An irreversible process in the dynamics of democracy and development

1127. In the dynamics of democracy and development which made their mark on the Tunisian landscape at the end of the twentieth century, the gains of women were strengthened. In the 1990s, women were thrust forward as partners and agents in the all-out drive for economic and social development.

1128. Regarded as an essential component of civil society and as "partners" in the development process, women constitute a major dimension through which the social order promoted by the historic declaration of 7 November 1987 was identified.

Sustained political commitment

1129. As a result of the political will and the efforts to instil human rights principles, women's rights have been strengthened, their roles diversified and their image enhanced. The impetus witnessed in recent years in the creative activity of women in organizations and in the economic, cultural and artistic fields stands not only as testimony to their own awareness of the importance of their role as a compelling party in the achievement of the national development objectives, but also as testimony to their recognition by the public authorities and the whole of civil society.

1130. The Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001), which will take the country into the twenty-first century, is pursuing this endeavour. One of its strategic objectives is to enhance the integration of women into the development process. The priorities set within the framework of this new five-year plan were defined in the light of the approaches and forecasts produced on conclusion of the national consultation concerning Tunisia's profile in the twenty-first century (conducted in 1997), which reaffirmed the option in favour of reconciling mastery of the attributes of modernity with the attachment to Arab and Muslim cultural values, thus implying strengthening of the role of women in development as both agents and beneficiaries.

1131. The recommendations and strategic objectives outlined in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995) were also taken into account in choosing these priorities, as were the African and Arab regional plans of action.

1132. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, Tunisian women already benefited from a number of advantages to strengthen their gains and achieve new progress: laws guaranteeing their rights, specific institutional mechanisms, a systematic policy of integration into sectoral development policies, non-governmental organizations for women and so on. The most priceless advantage, however, undoubtedly lies in the political will, which is in constant renewal, in the very highest ranks of the Government.

1133. In the future programme of action, the advancement of women is a top priority, along with employment, knowledge and youth. As part of the cultural endeavour initiated by Tahar Haddad and Habib Bourguiba, this policy will be based on three major parameters: equality in public life, partnership in the family and access to decision-making positions.
